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John Littlejohn
of F.

By
George Morgan

547

—

Joseph Morgan Jr.
from Helen -
Christmas 1896.

J. H.



John Littlejohn, of J.

Being in particular an account of his
remarkable entanglement with
the King's intrigues against
General Washington

By

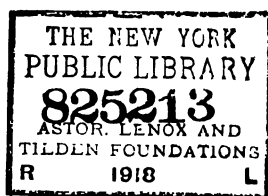
George Morgan

Philadelphia

J. B. Lippincott Company

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1. Mrs. F. W. Marshall. 4 June 1918.

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PART I

VALLEY FORGE



JOHN LITTLEJOHN, OF J.

CHAPTER I.

QUAKER HALL.

AT the beginning of the year 1778, General Washington lay at Valley Forge in what old army men called "the hub of the Quaker wheel." Of the several spokes of the wheel, one pointed southeast to Sir William Howe at Philadelphia; another west to the seat of the State government at Lancaster, which was half-way to York, whither Congress had fled; another northward to Bethlehem, where lay the wounded of Germantown; and still another to Reading, with its fugitives from the fallen city and its thousand captured Hessians. The hills at this Quaker hub stood high above the valley of the Schuylkill on the one side, and the plain of Great Chester on the other; and from their tops General Washington could sweep with his spy-glass the outermost rim of the wheel.

Following a day of brilliant sunshine early in January, the camp at the Forge was stormed in rear by squall after squall of cutting, fine snow, flaked like bird-shot, and tempestuously driven as from the

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guns of the enemy. The cold was benumbing,—savage, ferocious. Only the high officers housed in stone escaped its pinch. Many another it smote to the vitals. To the eleven thousand soldiers of the patriot army the tempest came like a mighty chastisement. Some were naked, many were starving, three thousand were sick. Huddled among the rocks and in the forest by Schuylkill side, these heard a continuous moan among the hemlocks topping the great hills. They felt the snow sifting their own winding-sheets down upon them.

At dusk all sentinels drew in for shelter; all light-horsemen of the outer patrol quit their posts,—all save one, who, pricked to it by honor, shot himself rather than endure till day.

Now, the horse that was set free by this desperate fellow's act of folly—more sagacious, more in love with life—sped down the slope of the South Valley hills, and, halting before a farm-house near the camp's edge, whinnied forth a plea for succor. The man who heard the call—Fairlamb, a Quaker of thirty-odd, master of the house—stamped out into the snow, impounded the runaway, and hung a lantern in the porch as a signal to the missing rider should he pass that way.

The house was known as Quaker Hall. It was as long, as low, as rambling as an inn. And on this night of the storm it was like an inn in another particular,—it gave shelter to many persons of diverse character and quality. First, there was a company of young needle-women from the Moravian school at Bethlehem. They had given up their seminary

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for use as a hospital, and had been billeted here, within sight of the army's fires, in order that they might make up into uniforms quantities of cloth found secreted in the Great Swamp of Bucks and seized by order of General Washington. These were now above stairs; like doves in a cote up under the eaves, they were well cut off from all below. In the chief room on the ground floor was a party of uproarious officers. Fairlamb had understood when he let them in at dusk that they were to plan plays for the diversion of the starving army; but, having possessed themselves of the parlor, they were now sitting in secret with a guard at the door, and from within came sounds fearful and ungodly to a Quaker's ears,—boisterous laughter, shrieks of derision, cries, threats, hisses of angry dissent. The tumult gave Fairlamb much concern, and it troubled his mother still more. This good woman wore upon her head a crown of hair whiter than the cap which covered it. In camp she was called "The Quaker Angel." One door of the room in which she now sat faced that of the parlor; another opened upon the porch where the lantern swung. It was the living-room of the family,—a scene of peace, yet suggesting war. Bolts of cloth, rolls of yarn, packages of lint lay along the walls. Here were reels, there were wheels. A table laden with teas and cordials ready to be sent to camp stood near the fire, on which pots simmered and kettles sang to the sleepy blinking of a cat.

The Quakeress was spinning flax into thread for the use of the young needle-women on the morrow. With her worked three Moravian sisters, who had

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also come from Bethlehem school. Two wore close-fitting, snipe-billed, cambric caps tied with blue ribbon, whereby one might know they were married. The dark red ribbon of the third sister betokened her still a spinster. The whirl of the four wheels was incessant. Upon the four spinners the firelight fell, and the light of candles from a sewing-table in the centre of the room added to the glow.

But there was still another woman in the room. Any one entering, unsuspecting of the aroma from the wild herbs steaming in the pots, would have sworn she perfumed it. As she sat by the table coquetting with Fairlamb,—idly showing him a butterfly caught a few weeks before and since kept a close prisoner in her jewel-box,—the candle-light faintly revealed the cream and roses of her complexion, the blue of her eyes, the shiny fluff of her hair. Her beauty, indeed, was amazing,—marred only by a nose which might have suggested the parrot but for the sweetness of the voice issuing beneath it. That she belonged neither to the Moravians nor the Quaker folk was plain enough. In fact, she was to them, in dress and manners, a living scandal. Her name was Alicia Gaw. By courtesy she was Lady Gaw, because she had been a petitioner before the House of Lords for rights of property and title. It was said that she had turned against the English, that her home had lately been in Paris, and that the King of France, through Dr. Franklin, had introduced her to Congress as an ally of great value in delicate intrigues.

Suddenly, in upon these burst a stranger, who

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came without a knock, and who cried, as he swung down from his shoulder the body of a man, "Your kindness and mercy, friends! Here is a lad near death!"

The speaker was like a starveling giant. Of huge frame, but gaunt, with monstrous shoulders, yet slim at the girth; young and comely, even if pinched as with years of privation; excellently sweet of speech, though roughened in skin by wind and weather; winsome of eye, which yet was wild and dancing, he came in upon the quiet scene in a manner and with a presence that startled and confounded.

As for the man whom he brought in, that was I, Asa Lankford, the same who tells this story.

The good people came crowding around us, questioning my rescuer and ministering to me. Very soon I was gazing about me with as much curiosity as though I had just come from downy feathers rather than from a bed of snow.

"Who art thou, my friend?" asked Fairlamb, as he chafed my hands; "wert thrown from the horse that came whinnying here awhile ago?"

Now, I was unable to speak, for an explosion on board the fire-brig "Hellcat" the fall before had left me with a curious weakness. I could hear well and see like a young eagle, but was as dumb as death.

So I shook my head.

"Friend," said Fairlamb, turning to the man who had saved me, but who now stood strangely aloof, in shadow, as quiet as the fire-tongs, "this lad hath suffered more than we thought. There is a surgeon

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in the other room. Had I not better call him hither?"

"A surgeon?" said my rescuer; "good. But is he of the army? What, pray, is his name?"

There was apprehension in the man's voice, that was clear. It was almost as if he had said, "Heigh! Officers here! Then I'd better be going."

Fairlamb looked him sharply over as he exclaimed, "Why, Pruitt, to be sure! But why dost thou ask his name? Dost fear him? And why dost thou stand aloof? Who art thou? Tell me thy own name."

"You may call me Ortolan," said the stranger.

"And dost thou belong to the army?"

"I have handled a sword."

"Mighty Goliath! Thou art almost a giant in stature, and thou hast handled a weapon, yet fearest to speak freely of thyself!"

With that Fairlamb left the room and knocked upon the parlor door.

No sooner had he gone than Ortolan began to quail under the searching gaze of the fine lady. Since his entry she had shot towards him a thousand looks. She had measured his hunting garb as if bent upon clothing a whole army in buckskin; she had galloped over his features as a great general o'errides a field which must be won in a day; she had pierced the cap in his hand many times through and through.

By and by she came over to the hearth where we two intruders sat. She gave a pretty shiver, pretending to be cold. She put out a foot and tapped an andiron with the toe of her boot. She asked me

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sympathetically how I felt, and when I had looked my thanks, she laughed with as sweet a laugh as I have ever heard pass out from the lips of woman, saying,—

“Ah, poor lad! In a little while you'll feel like a grig.”

I knew, however, that all this was meant not for me, but for my strange companion. She was manoeuvring, making up to him.

Finally she fixed her eyes upon Ortolan and said, “Pray tell me, sir, where I have met you?”

The pale Moravians spoke to each other with their eyes. The Quakeress clicked rebukefully with her tongue and whispered, in an aside, “Audacious!” Even I, rustic though I was, found offence in the woman's by-play, wondering that one should be so forward as she.

Ortolan arose and bowed.

“I've met you, madam,—of that I'm sure. I have met you, and 'twas a great honor; but I fear it was in my dreams.”

She now stood at the side of one of the great spinning-wheels, with her fingers among the spokes. Ortolan, bending like a courtier in front of her, rested a hand upon the standards.

“Very well, then,” said she, “I was mistaken.”

She gave the wheel such a lively spin that it hummed a tune to her words.

Ortolan looked up. An expression of relief came over his face.

As for the other, her teeth showed in a smile. She put her lips close to his ear and said,—

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"Pish! You call yourself 'Ortolan'! I will not breathe your name. But I know it,—I know it well, sir. And now I warn you. You'll be hanged if you don't clear out from here!"

The fellow started back. He looked her up and down; first in amazement, then haughtily.

"Madam," he began, in a high voice.

"Whist, fool!" she said.

She was still caressing the great wheel, spinning it smartly round and round, as if she were a beautiful witch, weaving his fate with hers. The next instant, as the hall door swung open and an inrush of air blew down the candle-flames, the wheel and she looked like a spider, capable of monstrous poisonings.

Just then the Quaker cried out cheerily from the doorway, "Come, friends; come into the other room. The surgeon says the drink there is a sure loosener for tongue-tied men. And, Alicia Gaw, lend me thy jewel-box. I wish to show Friend Pruitt thy butterfly. He can tell us its name and all about it."

Following close upon Fairlamb's heels, Ortolan and I passed into the hall, where the surgeon stood.

"Here, my friend," said Fairlamb, "is thy new patient. He seems well enough now. And here," he added, "is fresh matter for thee,—a wonderful butterfly, fluttering in a jewel-box. What dost thou think of it, and what mayst thou name it?"

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CHAPTER II.

THE BUTTERFLY BANQUET.

"Tut, tut," said Pruitt, "it's too dark here to make head or tail of a tiger, much less a butterfly. Come inside, where the devil's on duty as candle-snuffer."

He whispered to the guard, who cut his eyes searchingly towards Ortolan as we passed into the parlor.

A strange scene was now before me. It was very unlike the one I had just quitted. The room, which ran parallel with the hall, extended from window to window; the floor was sanded. Opposite the doorway was a wide fireplace, in which glowed a back-log, attended by many lesser logs, all blazing at the full. Midway the room, and extending from end to end, was a table made of rough boards. Tilted, spigot down, on this was a tierce of fire-cured Quaker cider as dark and strong as ale. Horn cups were scattered about. There was also the litter of a feast of nuts. Along each side of the table sat many men in many sorts of soldier gear,—blue, brown, and even scarlet. Some sat upon benches, others upon chairs. All faced a young man clad in blue and buff, and this young man was in full harangue on the condition of the army.

"It's just as I expected," said Pruitt, examining the lady's prize; "it's a Camberwell,—a Vanessa. Woodmen often see it fluttering about on warm days in winter. But I must pay attention to Lieu-

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tenant Updegraff. When half the blood in a young man's body goes to his face, you may be sure he is in a bad way. Let us listen!"

The speaker certainly was heated.

"Stupidity, apathy, greed, indolence, and the easy way! These," he exclaimed, "rule in camp and threaten the ruin of the country. There is not an officer here to-night who can buy a uniform with a whole year's pay. Our families are in distress. Our estates are slipping from our possession. In a word, our private affairs are overwhelmed, and the affairs of the country are in a most woful state. In the North they have made head against the enemy; but we here have been beaten from pillar to post, and now annihilation is threatened. Since such is the case, why should we not help to pull down the old leaders and set up meritorious new ones? This is a revolution, and we are revolutionists. I, for one, am for true blue Horatio of Roman spunk."

When Updegraff had thus spoken he sank back into his chair. Then arose a man of markedly genteel appearance. He was in civilian's dress, but was clearly an officer of rank.

The hum of small talk ceased, and the thunder of tapping feet rolled for a moment around the room. Then all became still.

"Gentlemen," he said, "it is growing late and I must leave you; but before I go I must give you a toast."

"A toast! a toast!" sang out the company.

"It is," continued he, glancing knowingly around him, "it is 'Defeat to English George!'"

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Pruitt alone turned his cup upside down.

Many of the officers rose respectfully as the toast-giver bowed himself out of the room.

"Perhaps you know our departed guest," said Pruitt to Ortolan, speaking with a sneer.

"Who is he?"

"Conway," said Pruitt, while his eyes snapped; "he is the head devil in this business,—the marplot, the knave of the play. He affects another name, but his disguise is thin. He has this night done enough to put his neck in the noose. What do you suppose is the meaning of the marplot's toast just drunk? It has a double significance."

Ortolan gazed blankly upon his interlocutor.

Pruitt blinked as he explained, "It was a riddle and a catch, but I could read the riddle, and was not to be caught by such a trick. 'Defeat to English George!' That means defeat to his Excellency, who comes of an English strain. The King of England is Dutch George, if I know my A B C's."

Again was the surgeon's speech cut short, this time by the pleasing voice of one who, though unmistakably a foreigner, spoke fluently in our tongue.

"'Tis a Frenchman known as Bonfils," whispered Pruitt; "but, as all suspect, such is not his true name. He is a Marquis de la Something-or-Other, and quit France because of a love-affair. A good fellow, I'm sure."

Monsieur Bonfils certainly was of good appearance. He was broad rather than tall,—young, robust, and dark-visaged. He wore his natural hair in a queue, and his clean-shaven face had upon his

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ness, slim and of light build, and his hair was not his own.

When he had heaved his sigh he began to talk impulsively, addressing his remarks to Pruitt. "Ah!" said he, with many French oaths and exclamations, "if we could but go to the Southern isles. If we could but go there we should find true welcome; and what sunsets they have in that part of the world! And the water, how blue, how clear, how fine! But alas! Monsieur Surgeon, though my comrade talks like one who has the whole Toulon fleet at his call, we have not so much as a sloop in which to attempt the voyage."

Now, when I had heard this I began to put two and two together to make a four; for, hidden in the swamps of Willkill Creek, near the Cockfoot Mills, in Delaware, whence I had come, lay a privateer then rigging for a voyage in the very waters talked of. This craft needed men of spirit to handle her guns, and here before me were just such men. I thought the matter over, pro and con, for a brief space, and, writing upon a tablet the facts in the case, made bold to pass it along to the surgeon. He read what I had written and said to me, "There is no doubt in your mind that the privateer is still there?"

"No doubt," I wrote.

"Has she letters of marque?"

I nodded "Yes."

"What is her name?"

I wrote "The Yellow Jacket."

Then the surgeon turned to the Frenchmen and told them what he had learned.

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"Here's your chance," said he; "if you really wish to turn your backs on Valley Forge and go down there where earthquakes turn towns as cooks turn flapjacks, here's your opportunity."

The Frenchmen instantly flew into ecstasies. They came to me and questioned me closely upon a score of points, and I answered them in writing to the best of my ability. They said they would set out in the morning for Cockfoot Mills. "The Yellow Jacket" was an ark sent from heaven, a godsend such as had been deigned to Noah of old. Then they began to buzz to each other in French.

In the midst of their talk I caught sight of the butterfly. It had escaped from the jewel-case, and now, perched upon the rim of a glass, was feeding upon the drops of cider that adhered thereto.

I looked towards the surgeon. He was preoccupied with thoughts concerning the politics of the moment. I moved my chair closer to him, intending to invite his attention to the escape of his charge. But he misinterpreted my purpose. He seized the hand with which I was about to jot down my word of warning and said,—

"Thank you. You are my friend, young sir. I now have hopes of breaking this cabal; you have rid me of the turbulent foreigners, and I am going to give it to our foolish young men here, musket-shot and cannon-ball; I'm going to give it to 'em hot, the fools!"

He arose as he spoke, and, pounding upon the table with his fist, said,—

"Now, young men, hear what an old bone-setter

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has to say. Let an old doctor give you a bolus or two. Young men, you are in a fever, and a dangerous one. I have been feeling your pulse for the last two hours. It leaps viciously. It needs to be calmed. You need to be put into a state of moisture, and I shall proceed to do it."

"Sir," broke in Updegraff, "let me interrupt you long enough to announce to those present that a paper of resignation has been prepared, and that those who wish to sign it may step forward at their pleasure and adorn it with their sign-manuals."

"Was it written hot?" asked some one at the other end of the room. "Is it strong? Will it hold?"

"Will it hold? Yes, like a ring in a bull's nose!"

"Have you yourself signed it, Updegraff?"

"Yes, in a big John-Hancockian hand, and with a whip-lash curly-cue. Will you stand to it, Yarrington?"

"Through thick and thin," replied the young man who had inquired concerning the cogency of the paper, as he stepped forward and put his name upon the scroll.

"And the rest of ye,—are ye ready? Inskeep, Bonsall, Winch, Vaughn, Gordy, Twiford? Come! No ifs or buts about it. A hot yes or a cold no!"

"Hold!" shouted Pruitt, "let me first say my say. Let me first tell ye that if this be a mortal wound it will be of your own infliction. You are heated, young men. Let me tell you of the fearful blunder you are in danger of making. Do you not know that if you use the quill to-night you will find your places filled to-morrow? This cabal you hear of is but a

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spurge in the great sea. You here to-night are but an outer curl of the wave. How many men in Congress have joined this cabal? Seven—no more. How many supporters has it in the army? A beggarly dozen. How many wink at it in the country? Only those disappointed in contracts and commissions."

"Jove, what a roarer! what a snorter!" exclaimed a Conway man, mockingly; "he blows as if to rip loose the lines of latitude and longitude from this quarter of the yeth. When will he have done and let us go on with our business?"

"Yes," said another, "he talks too much. I'll give him a shot," and, getting upon his feet, he said to Pruitt, "Let us suppose Gates in command instead of Washington. What would he do? I can tell you one thing he would do. Had he as many soldiers at his beck and call as you have words at yours, he would sound the march before the clock could strike twelve and drive the British out of the capital."

Suddenly the cry was raised, "Look! Look!—a butterfly! And may the devil burn me, it's drunk!"

The company had at last become aware of the presence of the tipsy thing. Such a shout arose as hurt a man's ears to hear.

Nevertheless, Pruitt stood his ground. Time and again he endeavored to win the attention of the company, but he failed in every attempt, until the silly creature, fluttering to the horn cup immediately in front of him, perched upon its rim and fanned its wings under his very nose. Then the malcontents, after a fresh outburst of merriment, shouted,—

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"Go on! Go on! Give us a lecture on entomology. A sermon, Surgeon Pruitt! A sermon on the follies, vanities, and excesses of butterflies in midwinter."

"And that I will," spoke up Pruitt, quickly. "One cause of the army's discontent is that it must winter upon bleak hills on the edge of a wilderness. It complains of the lack of food and of the ferocity of polar storms. An army, hark ye, gentlemen, made up of hefty, fat creatures, with sheep's wool and furs, and the Lord knows what not on their backs,—yea, and the powerful heat of fire to see them through,—I say, an army of sentient beings, with liberty and manhood at stake, complains of winter, when here in front of me flutters a poor, delicate, flimsy thing, a worm on wings, a tiny mite of life, which, notwithstanding the terrific odds against it, will fight the winter through and appear in the sunshine of spring, a happy, contented creature, flitting from rose to rose, from blossom to blossom,—a victor where you are vanquished!"

A shout of approbation rewarded the surgeon's outburst of eloquence.

"And," continued the speaker, in a pleading, conciliatory tone, for he felt that he had made an impression upon the company, and wished to follow up his advantage, "relying upon the courtesy of this congregation of the courteous, I will ask you to bear in mind, dear friends, that we must not aid and abet our enemies by giving them a hint of dissensions and weaknesses in the army of the continent. Again, we must not wrong our General, our Virginia chieftain——"

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A groan came from the end of the table.

"Washington," said some one hidden from view; "he! why, his brains are frost-bitten; he is a cold, forbidding man,—a loser of battles!"

This utterance begot instant silence.

Pruitt caught his breath and leaned forward, seeking, apparently, to single out the traducer of him whom he championed.

A witty officer near whom I sat whispered to his neighbor, "What rashness! To say such a thing in an uncommitted company like this is suicidal. If the fellow had expressed it differently! If he had said that our honored chief slept one night, his wig being doffed at a spot where the aurora borealis played upon his head and magnetized his brains!"

"And that, therefore, he is a genius with polar propensities——"

"A coldish, though great man. Ha! ha!"

"Yes, if the snarling fellow had said that it might have passed; but, as it is, in the name of Pruitt, woe! Now we shall have it. See, the thing sticks in his craw. We shall catch it now!"

Pruitt, in truth, was only silent because he was endeavoring to stifle profound wrath. The insult had impinged itself upon his consciousness like a bayonet's thrust. His cavernous face seemed for the instant to swell fat with blood, and he thrust his long, bony forefinger many times here and there in the direction of the unknown traducer.

Finally, his tongue found speech, and he spoke as from the lowermost cell of his lungs, hissing and with extreme violence:

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"I pronounce that," said he, "to be a lie; and I denounce it as worse than a common lie. I denounce it as a calumny; a rank, poisonous calumny; a calumny, I say, a weed vilely rooted in the heat and muck of conspiracy and come to leaf with all the stench of the Tory's intrigue and the devil's treason!"

He paused for breath, but still he shook his bony forefinger, and soon he added, "My friend will meet your friend at the King of Prussia tavern at noon tomorrow. I challenge the calumniator of the noblest of patriots and the most magnanimous of men. Stand forth, you knave, stand forth!"

Silence again embraced us. I thought I could hear the vibrations of the butterfly's wings.

"Stand forth!" said Pruitt, hoarsely; "who is the traducer? Oh, ye need not hang back. I will fetch ye out of the bush, ye skulker! Was it you, Updegraff?"

Pruitt thrust his finger through the air and pointed straight towards the chief malcontent of the company.

"I—I—I?" said Updegraff, in surprise, getting upon his feet nervously; "I—I? Why, yes; if you say so. I? Why, sir, damme, I am not to be catechised, I am not to be hectorred, I am not to be dra-gooned, sir. If you were not so far away from me, sir, I should spit in your face, and I regret, by Jove, sir, that my spittle should fall short of such a fly as you! My friend," he ended, "my friend will meet your friend at the King of Prussia tavern at noon tomorrow."

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Pruitt laughed exasperatingly. "No, Updegraff," he replied, "my friend will not meet your friend,—not at all, not at all. You are not the man who uttered the calumny."

All at once a pale-faced youth, who had been sitting a few chairs beyond Updegraff, stood up and said quietly, "I, too, questioned the right of yon bone-setter to catechise one in this assembly; but now I declare that I am he who spoke the speech in question, and I further declare, in the presence of gentlemen, that I will meet him at the first creep of day in the gorge at the heel of Mount Joy, known to some as Drumstick Hill, and, if I do not kill him, may he kill my mother's son! My name is Yarrington, and I choose as weapons double-charged shot-guns, with three paces and a squint of daylight 'twixt man and man."

"'Twixt murderer and murderer, rather!" quoth Ortolan to me; "this is savage business, is it not? Who is the young man?" he added, addressing the officer who sat next to me. "To which line does he belong?"

"The Virginia, I think," whispered the officer; "he was one of the 'Liberty or Death' band, and hails from the great West Augusta wilderness."

Just then the tension of the scene was broken by the quick entrance of Fairlamb, our Quaker host.

"Ha! Friend Pruitt," he demanded, gayly, "what hast thou done with the living jewel lately committed to thy charge? Hath the butterfly which I gave over to thy keep proven a bee or a wasp or a hornet,

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and hath it stung every man in this room so that he is mad and fit for Bedlam?"

The surgeon got upon his feet and gazed in perplexity around the board, seeking to espy the precious Vanessa. The company broke into laughter at his wry looks and general air of chagrin.

This quick slip from the verge of tragedy back into that which smacked of the comical bred a spirit of banter in the devil-may-care officers of the line, and they lost no time in directing the shafts of their wit upon the two gentlemen who had so lately eaten fire, each from the other's lip.

"Silence!" commanded the Quaker. "Friend Pruitt, do thou deliver unto me the thing committed to thy charge."

Pruitt, seeing the butterfly zigzagging on unsteady wings towards the other end of the table, dashed forward in chase thereof. Everybody cried out, and when Pruitt, in his headlong progress, stumbled over a leg thrust forward to trip him, the merriment scarce knew bounds.

The Frenchmen were in high glee. They clapped their hands, they shrieked with laughter.

The butterfly flew towards the fireplace. A shout went up,—a roar of fear, of dismay, of protestation, that seemed a clap of thunder.

Briquet, with mock heroic manner, drew a silver-hilted sword and put himself in front of the fire.

"What!" said he, "shall it not be told in France that in America the lovely, charming ladies have at table, in lieu of pestiferous house-flies and midges, La Papilio herself, who flieth from glass to glass and

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sticketh, mon Dieu ! upon the edges of sugar-bowls and honey-dishes to sip their sweets ! Voilà ! Champion of Psyche !”

At this instant we all gave ear to a voice too musical to have come from bearded lips.

“My treasure ! my treasure !” it cried. “Where is my butterfly ?”

We looked towards the door, and there we saw, peering in upon us from the hall, none other than Lady Alicia Gaw. She was looking first this way, then that, in search of her lost prize.

“Madame,” spoke up Briquet, “in a moment. Trust me, madame ; in a moment.”

Amid a clapping of hands the gallant Frenchman captured the fugitive as it fluttered towards the flames. He placed it daintily upon his sword’s edge, and, with the hilt held outwardly, advanced, with a great show of courtesy, towards the lady. She waited till the creature was within reach, plucked it from the blade as she would have plucked a flower from the stem, kissed it, placed it in her bosom, courtesied, and fled.

“A toast !” cried M. Briquet, turning upon us and flashing his sword high in air ; “I give a toast, the chief toast of the night : ‘The Lady of the Butterfly.’”

A cheer went up, and those present scrambled for their cups and glasses and moved, hot foot, upon the tierce of cider.

The Quaker was too quick for them. He stepped to the nearest window and propped up the sash. Then he seized the cask in his arms, bore it to the window, and threw it out into the snow.

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"Stay!" said he, facing the company. "Too much is too much. It is my turn, men of the firelock. The cask hath gone out at the window; my guests may find easier exit at the door. But before thou goest," said he, turning to Pruitt, "I wish to say a word to thee." Then, mildly beckoning to Yarrington, he went on, "And a few words to thee, my friend."

The company assumed the air of expectancy.

"Thou," continued the Quaker, looking Pruitt over from head to foot, "art a challenger; and thou," he added, addressing Yarrington, "art the acceptor of a challenge to fight to the death. Is that not so?"

Both Pruitt and Yarrington bowed in acknowledgment.

"Now, tell me," said Fairlamb, "by what warrant dost thou arrange a bloody matter in this house of peace?"

Neither answered.

The Quaker went on, "Since this house was built peace hath dwelt within its walls, and it hath been illumined by the inward light, and that light shall not be put out now, and that peace shall not be broken now. It matters not that blood is not to be shed here; the shedding of the blood hath been arranged for here, and one fact pitted against the other is a wrong measured against a wrong. Thou, Friend Surgeon, must withdraw thy challenge."

"He, sir," said Pruitt, motioning towards his antagonist, "must first withdraw his words of defamation."

"No; thou must withdraw thy challenge."

"I shall do no such thing."

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"Thou shalt do that very thing."

Fairlamb walked to the door and called out, "Hance Fuchslager! Hance! Wake thee, Hance, and fetch me the halters and straps thou wert oiling a while ago."

Then, all of a sudden, Pruitt changed his tactics.

"In the name of common sense!" he exclaimed, "have you forgotten? Do you not remember your own injunction?"

He whispered in the Quaker's ear; then, turning, roared out, "Break off! Break off!"

The gentlemen of the army echoed the shout. Each sprang for his cloak and hat and sword. Some leaped through the open window; others jammed their way into the hall, and so passed, pell-mell, out of doors.

CHAPTER III.

ORTOLAN.

HARDLY had Fairlamb closed the outer door upon the officers, when Alicia Gaw came peeping and peering into the room where I alone still lingered, feeling like a dolt among the empty chairs and empty mugs. Catching sight of me, she glided up, saying, "I'm looking for Mr. Ortolan. Do you know where he is? Did he go out with the officers?"

I motioned towards the door.

"So? Then I must ask you to run after him and bring him back."

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I started to do her bidding.

"Wait!" said she; "here is a pen. I will write him a line and you shall take it."

While her quill was flying, the young needlewomen, who until then had remained above stairs, came trooping into the room.

"Have they gone? Have they gone?" they asked. "Oh, those noisy people! They've gone at last!"

They glanced at the cups, at the flickering candle flames, at the evidences of riot everywhere visible. Out of the corners of their eyes, too, they looked suspiciously upon me. They were, for the most part, well on in their teens, and some of them up in their twenties. A comelier bevy, thought I, never came together.

"See!" said one; "look! There are men at the window. Can they be coming back?"

"What!" cried another; "they're kissing their fingers at us; let us go."

And with that they ran laughing out of the room.

I pinched a candle-wick for Lady Alicia, and she sealed her letter by the freshened flame.

"My lad," said she, graciously, "pray take this to Mr. Ortolan. He befriended you; here now is an opportunity for you to do him as great a service."

Fluttering like a bird before me, she led the way into the hall, lighted a lantern for me, and saw me out upon the porch. I felt her eyes upon me as I followed the trail of the officers. The tracks were thick; they spotted the snow for the full width of the road, and among them were the peculiar marks

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left by the hunting-shoes of Ortolan. I heard the sound of voices on ahead. I ran forward, plunging, leaping.

All at once I became aware that the road was blocked. I flashed my light along the way. On a rock by the roadside sat a hulking big man, with a peg-leg that rested straight and stiff in the snow in front of him. He was splay-mouthed and fierce of look. In the road itself was a bear, jet black and as big-bodied as a giant oak.

The man groaned and beckoned me towards him.

"God sent you, comrade!" said he.

His voice was gruff; his face as red as a drunkard's. He took off his hat and bobbed towards me a head of curious shape, curved as it was like the heavier end of an owl's egg.

"God Himself sent you along this road," he went on; "you came a-purpose to help poor old Pfaff Laffoon, the bombardier. Don't be afraid, little comrade! The bear won't hurt you. What I want you to do is to unfasten this peg for me. The stump's so fresh it's pestering the life out of me. I got it at Brandywine. Ouch! God! Oh, billions of devils, how it hurts!"

He screwed his body about like a man suffering the tortures of the rack.

I knelt at once to unstrap the peg; but, as I stooped, fear and caution prompted me to strategy, so I wrote in the snow, "I'm bound for camp. What are its bearings?"

"In the name of mercy!" he cried. "Can't talk? Well, that's queer. I wondered what cat had got

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your tongue. But why the devil do you want to go to camp? It's Camp Starvation. They say I've got the cunningest tongue in the army, yet I haven't been able to beg ten bites in ten days. How, then, do you, with death in your mouth, expect to eat? Still, if you want to know the lay of things, I'll tell you, and you may go lay your bones where they'll be picked."

He slapped the bear's face down into his lap.

"Now, sir," he went on, "here's a true map of the whole camp. This left ear is Mount Misery; this right ear is Mount Joy. Follow that side of my bear's jowl, and you have one side of camp; follow this side, and you see the other. As for the nose, it's pointed towards the British. Back of the ears runs a deep gorge. That's camp for you! Sirree bob, I swear it! Cut and curve, bend and twist, it's shaped exactly like the ugly black mug of this beast of mine. But be a little more entertaining, stranger! Haven't you a bite of kitefoot to give a man?"

I shook my head.

"Nor a pinch of Scotch?"

I drew from my pocket a bladder of rappee.

Laffoon whooped with delight.

"Luck! luck!" he roared, sniffing at the bag of snuff, and pouring into his palm enough of it to prime a cannon; "luck! luck! The world improves as she rolls. Things go better!"

He threw back his head and tossed the whole handful into his mouth.

"Now," said he, thrusting the peg into a pocket

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of his great-coat and seizing his crutches; "it's up and off, I say! Pray God we're still in time to see the fight. I'm Laffoon, the grumbler; this bear of mine is Lexington, the growler! Forward, my hearty!"

We took the road,—I ahead, Laffoon following, the bear at his master's heels. Anon, the bombardier sneezed, and I knew he was warming his nose with my rappee.

In this order we pushed along until by and by the shine and fantastic sparkle of firelight among the ice-tipped, swaying branches of the forest trees caused Laffoon to cry out that we were approaching the rendezvous of the duellists. He cursed the bear as a laggard, belaboring it with his crutch to urge it on. As we drew nearer we saw that the light came from two fresh bonfires built on the frozen surface of a stream. The stream lay at the bottom of a V-shaped gorge, which here defiled from the valley, and cut in between two hills piled up so high that mountains might have claimed them as kin. The glow from the fires tinged both walls of the ravine, disclosing huge boulders of primal rock, now sheeted with ice, pines, cedars, and thick-rooted laurel, all weighted with glistening snow. Far overhead was a black sky, amazingly bejewelled, for the storm in passing had torn the clouds apart.

At the very moment we joined the party, the ice of the stream cracked under the weight of those who trampled it. There was a cry, a general shout, a scamper. The company dispersed to the right and to the left. Some of the officers fled to one bank of

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the stream, some to the other. Only those concerned in the matter of blood remained about the fires.

Within the full shine of one fire stood the party of Yarrington. He was attended by Updegraff. Close to the other fire stood Pruitt, with Bonfils at his side. The Frenchman bowed and smiled, whispered, frowned, cast appreciative looks about, volleyed in words. He was parleying. We learned as we came up that he had called for flambeaux.

While the torches were being prepared, Laffoon went up to Pruitt and spoke in his ear. I, meantime, made my way to Ortolan, who stood almost within reach of Yarrington, and handed him the letter from Alicia Gaw. Ortolan read the letter, tore it into fragments, and cast them from him with a puff of his breath. This I saw by the increasing light of the torches, one of which was held by Bonfils, the other by Updegraff. Each torch threw upon its target a perfect light. Pruitt's cavernous eyepits were illumined to their depth. Yarrington's face showed as if cut from whitest rock. Bonfils stepped forward and drew a line with the point of his sword, from combatant to combatant, as straight as though marked with chalk. Then he whirled his torch about until it flared. Updegraff likewise put his lightwood knots to the kiss of the air.

"We are ready here," said he.

"And here," said Bonfils.

"Hold!" cried Pruitt. He spoke like a stentor, waving his pistol-hand round and round in the face of the company. "Gentlemen," he said, "I have only the most trifling grudge against my comrade

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yonder. Why should I kill him? Why should he kill me? Under the Articles of War the survivor would be cashiered. Why, then, should we hold each other seriously to account for certain idle things said and done to-night?"

"This is irregular," interposed Bonfils, with a show of vexation.

"Coward! Poltroon!" cried the officers.

"Stay!" said Pruitt, his voice sinking. "I do not fear to fight. I will take you all, singly or together, after I've had my say. But I must tell you first that there is one among us who deserves death ten thousand times more than any other man here. This man is a deserter, a spy, an emissary of the King! My pistol now covers him! Behold, gentlemen! John Littlejohn, once trusted among the Quaker Blues; once a captain in the Macaronis, and now—the blackest of knaves!"

Pruitt pointed straight at Ortolan.

But Ortolan's movements were quicker than his assailant's words. Before Pruitt had ceased to speak, the stranger's weapon was up.

Each fired at the same moment.

Pruitt, staggering forward, bedaubed the snow with the red of his spittle.

Instantly there was a click! click! click! It sounded all around. Swords flashed. The air cracked with a fusillade. In the confusion I saw Ortolan making off among the rocks. He looked for all the world like a chased cat as he took the wall of the gorge and sped away in the darkness.

At that moment I heard Laffoon cry out at the

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top of his lungs, "Stay there! stop you! halt, gentlemen of the army! The murderer's off, but here's another just as bad! The devil's gone, but here's his mate! Down with him! Down with him! Down with the sneak who plays us dumb that he may go talk for the king!"

Until that moment it had not occurred to me that my chance entanglement with Ortolan's affairs would compromise me. But as I turned towards Laffoon I saw that I was trapped. The bombardier was glaring at me, his pistol up. A few of the officers were hastening back in response to his call.

"You whelp! you scrub! you black devil!" grunted Laffoon; "come here!"

In the excitement incident upon Ortolan's escape I had drawn my own pistol, but this now fell from my hand, and I seated myself on a log facing the bombardier. I confess that I trembled like a coward. "The devil has played me a trick," said I to myself; "these people know I was with Ortolan; they will riddle me like a sieve."

"Good God!" roared the bombardier, as the officers came crowding round. "What a tomfool trick it is to come spying into camp and playing dumb! Why, you rip! you scrub! you eternal knot of hellfire! I've had my eyes on you for two hours running. Fairlamb knew you for a spy. He said so to this poor devil of a surgeon here. That's why the Quaker came into the big room where we were all caterwauling over Conway. You didn't see me, did you? But I was there, you whelp! Yes, I was there. And when I peeked in at the window

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and saw you with the fine wench, you didn't see me then, did you? Nor had you sense enough to know I was hocussing you,—you gammon! when you fell on me in the road awhile ago. At him, gentlemen! Cut his liver out!"

Meanwhile I had regained my composure. I looked at the fellow with contempt. I got up, walked over to my pistol, blew the snow from the pan and primed it well. Then I drew forth my tablet and wrote that I had never laid eyes on Ortolan until that night. I had never seen or heard of him before. I was no spy. I then bared my arm to show the blue mark of a Whig riverman, and produced also a letter across which was written the well-respected legend, "On Public Business." This was a formal message from the commandant of the post at Wilmington, giving my history and recommending me for confidential service at head-quarters. "How did you come by this?" asked an officer. "Gad, Laffoon, you've blundered."

At that moment another of the company, lowering his pistol, gave a cheet like the call of a bobolink flying over the reeds of the Delaware.

I ran up to him and seized both his hands.

"The other's a spy and a murderer!" cried my unknown friend, "but this one's true! I'll swear it, gentlemen; he's true! It was the 'Hellcat's' whistle I gave, and he's answered it. Come now; keep your eye on him, Laffoon; but hands off, I say."

With that the whole company turned their attention to Pruitt, and my heart began to beat once more.

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CHAPTER IV.

IN THE INNERMOST CIRCLE.

AT first we all thought Pruitt dead, but, just as we were laying him out on the floor of his own cabin at the top of the height above the gorge, he came to and begged the officers to hurry with him to the Quaker's. Bonfils at that moment spied a fur sleeping-bag, and crying, "Here's a scabbard for the hacked sword!" enveloped the wounded man in its folds and bore him off.

Laffoon hung back. I, too, remained in the cabin. Laffoon kindled a fire and began to piece together the fragments of Alicia Gaw's letter. For my part, fatigue oppressed me, and I lay down in a bed of forest leaves. Never before had I been so near done to death. As sleep crept over me I heard Laffoon cry out, "The wench loves him!"

When I awoke arrows of sunlight were shooting in. Laffoon had disappeared—"gone," thought I, "to hunt down Ortolan." As I had no guilt about me, I did not wonder at this. My spirit leaped as I hurried forth into the broad of day. It was the most radiant of mornings; the sun was taking the blue out of half the sky. A brisk breeze and a nipping air gave fresh motion to all things animate. Crows were cawing among the pines on the height; wag-
oners below were whistling as they cracked their whips; artificers near the demolished forge were play-

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ing upon their anvils; the camp-bell was sounding for a court, and, from afar, came the tan-ta-ran-tan of drums beating up the guard.

Eager to view the camp, yet balked by the forest trees, which here prevented a sweep of the eye, I was overjoyed when I discovered a curiously constructed outlook standing a few paces in rear of the cabin. It was Pruitt's "Crow's Nest," a tower from which the surgeon had planned to flash certain sun-signals along the hills. A ladder led up to the platform, which was built in the tops of trees. I quickly ascended. A magnificent prospect greeted my eyes,—the Schuylkill, ice-bound in a great valley of farms and forests; the heavily timbered southward hills showing black beyond a snowy plain; the distant northward mountains bluer than the sky above them. Then I turned my eyes down upon the camp. I could trace its every feature,—the forts, the earthworks, the cannon, the quarters of the cavalry, the cabins of the ten thousand. The streets between the cabins were black with soldiers, sunning themselves, swarming around the fires, wrestling, bargaining with sutlers. How it stirred me! How it thrilled me to lay eyes upon them,—the New Englanders of coast and mountain, the men from along the Alleghanies, the Virginians, the Carolinians, the hunters from the distant wilderness!

By this time I was in a state of elation. The night before I had been sorry I had come to camp; now I was glad, and said over to myself the things I would tell the miller upon my return to Cockfoot's. The miller was not my father, but I thought of him as

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such. My own father and mother had been drowned at sea and the miller had taken me up and cared for me. He had managed my property, had sent me to college, had whipped it into me that I must be a man; so I loved the miller, and he was very much in my thoughts as I passed down from the heights into the hollow where General Washington had his quarters.

The head-quarters house was built so solid it looked like a fort hewn out of rock. My heart thumped as I was shown in among a company of officers all in uniform, their tongues clacking over the shooting of Pruitt. One of these asked, "Do you dine with the General?" I shook my head and wrote that I wished to see Colonel Hamilton.

"Hamilton, is it?" said he; "oh, Hamilton's with the General's party. They're out for a canter in the broken roads about camp, but they'll all be right here on this spot very soon, for 'tis dinner-time now. Make yourself comfortable; he'll be here in a jiffy."

I made my way to an unoccupied window seat and busied myself in a covert study of the gentlemen of the army. There were many celebrities present, but none of them interested me half as much as did an ancient brigadier,—a stocky, heavy-set man, with a resolute lip and face of fire.

Some one had mentioned Conway. "Pish!" said he, scornfully, "what does Conway amount to? He juked at Germantown; he juked—I swow to Jove he juked! And, damn him, say I, for a whiskerless spitter,—a French cat!"

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As he spoke, a young officer briskly entered the room.

"A French cat!" he cried, in echo; "ah, general, God knows I've no stealth about me except such as becomes a soldier. What think you, gentlemen," he added, bowing to the company, "the general—my friend, the man I love—speaks of me as a French cat!"

He laughed as he threw his arms around the shoulders of the brigadier. He seemed a boy, but his air, his looks, his gestures, were those of one who had seen the world.

"Zooks, sirs!" said the brigadier, "the markis beats me down a devil of a sight quicker than he did the British at Brandywine."

By this I knew that the young officer was Lafayette, whose manner now changed, as, drawing a newspaper from his pocket, he exclaimed,—

"But what do you think of this? Was there ever such an outrage?"

"What is it?" asked one; "a camp sheet?"

"Yes, a scurrilous thing. What! have you not heard of it?"

"No," "no," "no," came from all around.

"Heavens! Next to the shooting of Pruitt, it's the talk of the camp."

"What's in it? Who printed it?"

"You remember," explained Lafayette, "that on Christmas day the General gave permission to a party of New England men to issue a gazette, which was to contain only harmless camp intelligence, such as the soldiers might be permitted to send to their friends

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at home. Well, a few days ago some Conway men stole the types and press of the gazette, and they have scattered broadcast this new sheet, *The Gunwad*."

"A lively title."

"Yes, and lively matter it contains. It is brimful of growls about starvation and death from freezing; it is peppery with personal assaults upon the Commissary-General, the Quartermaster-General, the Muster-Master-General, the Baker-Master-General, and the Commander-in-Chief himself is not spared."

"In the name of old Dawpluck!"

"In the name of the devil himself!"

"Yes. 'Tis black with scurrility."

"And there's nothing in the pasquinade in favor of the General?"

"Yes; one little article in which the humorous affair at Quaker Hall is held up in its true light. The writer satirizes what he calls 'The Butterfly Banquet,' and pokes all manner of fun at its participants. One good matter has already sprung from this article. It gave the names of two minor officers, Updegraff and Yarrington, and the General, whom I left at Quaker Hall a half-hour ago, has taken steps to have them cashiered."

"And what of *The Gunwad* itself?"

"Oh, it is being suppressed. The types have been sunk in the Schuylkill, the press has been broken, and an order has been issued prohibiting any publication of whatsoever character within the limits of camp."

At this juncture a sentry by the door jingled his

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ramrod against the window and called out that General Washington was coming. Some of the officers drew near the window and watched the party as they galloped up on their steaming and smoking horses. General Washington bestrode his favorite "Blue-skin." The Life-Guards were out in force, and they made a gallant show as they gave their parting salute and frisked away towards their quarters on a neighboring knoll by the river. The General swung himself out of his saddle and stamped into the house. As he passed along the hall towards his private office he looked in at the door-way and graciously saluted his guests; but Colonel Hamilton, having been told that a strange youth awaited him, stepped into the room at once and came over to my window. He read the letter I handed him, looked me up and down, and said, "Smallwood's writing for certain! Humph! Yes, how do you do, sir?" shook hands with me, remarked, "You are mute, he says; too bad for you, but good enough for our purpose," and then, having thought a little, began to beam with smiles. "My dear sir," he said, "the more I think of it the more I am convinced that you are the very clerk I've been in search of."

With that Colonel Hamilton led the way towards the office of his chief. In the hall I was surprised to see Laffoon. He was talking with the guard, but when he saw that Colonel Hamilton had accepted my credentials unquestioningly, he slipped away, grimly saluting. As we passed in at the office door-way, General Washington gave me a quick, smart look,—a sharp, glancing look,—during which

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I doubt not he measured every inch of me inside and out.

"General," said the aide, "here is a young man, Mr. Lankford, who is willing to lend us his services as a penman. He is a late arrival in camp, and comes straight from Smallwood. He is of the stamp you spoke of, and brings high credentials."

The General bent his head, but this time his glances scarcely grazed me.

"The business rests with you, colonel," he said; "by good rights every one of the transcripts for Congress and the Board of War should be sent by express not later than noon to-morrow."

"'Tis true, General," replied Hamilton, "and, with your permission, I will ask our new recruit to begin at once upon the work of transcribing the letters. May we have the use of this table whilst dinner is in progress?"

"Certainly," said the General, "or longer, if you wish, provided the young man be a person of discretion."

"Dinner is ready, sah!" announced a valet, whereat General Washington, without further ado, quit the room. And when Colonel Hamilton had placed some work before me, and had seen to it that I was provided with paper, ink, and quills, he, too, made his exit.

At the click of the area-latch there popped into my mind a command laid upon me by the miller of Cockfoot's upon the morning of my departure from the Forks. The miller had said, "Asa, bring me a clean inventory of the parts of the gentleman who is

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feeling the run of the Revolutionary dust; look at his thumbs! A miller, Asa, always looks at a man's thumbs. This thumb on my right hand is worth as much to me as my head."

General Washington had then been in the world almost forty-six years, and was at the perfection of lusty manhood. He stood six feet high, and was so upright of body that a plummet dropped from his chin would have swung between the toes of his boots. These, in size, were No. 13; and his fists were as big and as hefty as a farrier's hammer. He was large-boned, large-limbed, and bore a handsome store of flesh, rich in healthful quality as well as in quantity. His weight of body was two hundred and ten pounds; his weight of personality I could not presume to figure upon. His face was long, yet square-jawed. His mouth was small, and his teeth were good and white. His eyes were large, with bluish-gray pupils, very lively and dancing and expressive. These were set in large sockets, under a noble forehead topped with deep brown hair, which was dressed in the soldier's style,—rolled back and queued and powdered with such common flour as we at Cockfoot's could boast of grinding by the shipload.

But, as I am willing to avouch, the chief point of singularity in this great man's physiognomy was the bridge of his nose. If it be true, as philosophers say, that character dwells in the nose of a man, then it was this bridge of his that brought the Continental army safely over many a torrent of disaster. Never have I seen a nose with so broad a nasal bone,—it was as broad as a lady's thumb at the knuckle; not,

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perhaps, as broad as the miller's thumb, but fully as wide as the width of any lady's thumb measured at the middle.

His cheeks were full and ruddy, and his face was slightly marked with a pitting of small-pox. He was deep-chested, and had a sturdy, fine leg. His countenance was thoughtful, his air full of dignity such as men used to Old World phrases speak of as majestic.

An hour passed—two hours; I thought the dinner would never come to an end. But finally the brigadier entered, yawned as if to swallow me, and began to nod over the office fire. Then Hamilton, reappearing, plunged into work. A chance smile, provoked by sounds from the chimney-place, caused me to observe the peculiar brightness and amiability of his countenance. His nose, too, was peculiar,—not broad at the bridge, like the General's, but extremely broad at the end. He had a very high look of manhood and honor. By and by he came over and examined my work. He reproved me, I remember, for my overuse of capital letters.

"My friend," said he, "it is a vice of the time; though it used to be a small matter, it is no longer such. See, now! this, per example, is a letter to Dr. Franklin, is it not? and Dr. Franklin, as you are aware, has fine taste in script. Here again we have an imperfect letter to President Wharton at Lancaster. I'd recopy each of these."

Then he turned away. He had leaned towards me, with his white hand on the edge of my desk. His beruffled wristband, together with a daintiness

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of air from somewhere close about him,—an air suggesting perfume, yet not perfume,—made me feel abashed, as I would have felt had a fine lady so honored me with nearness of person.

But just then the door was opened, as if the strong fingers of the wind without had lifted the latch, and in came a blast that was felt even among the coals of the fireplace. Quick following this rude intruder came another as unwelcome and as rude,—a man with desperation in his looks. He appeared to me to be beside himself, and I heard the aroused brigadier exclaim, "That man's mad, daft, looney! What's the matter with him?"

The fellow had black eyes, with great lustre in them. He stood for a moment in the middle of the room, and then walked over to the table at which sat Colonel Hamilton, quill in hand.

"Well?" said Hamilton.

"Sir," said the man, brazenly and harshly, "I'm starving! I can't help it, before God, I can't! I have tried to stick it out, but I can't. Billy is sick in our cabin, and we've all been giving our food to him, and none of us has had a mouthful to eat for five days. I can't help it. I had to come. They told me not to come, but I said I would, if you'd hang me for it. Before God, sir, we won't stand it. If you won't give us anything to eat, let us go away; let us go up in the mountains and find some wild things. I know this is what you'd call a kind of mutiny, but I don't mean to be that way. If you can't help us, let us go; and if you can't let us go, let us break the ice in the river and drown ourselves.

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Why, sir, we drank water every half-hour last night to keep our bellies full of something. Sirs, I'm no common beggar; I beg for a whole army!"

By this time the fellow's voice was so husky that he could hardly be heard. His eyelids could not hold in the tears, and they ran down and fell over his chin upon his loose-hanging waistcoat.

Hamilton tried to speak, but for the life of him he could not.

But the brigadier, smacking his thigh, sprang up, crying, "Come with me to the General! I want him to see a starving man. It's damned fat and damned fine in this house, Hamilton, but it's blessed lean in camp!"

This was but one of many remarkable scenes now swiftly enacted. That day and night and all next day officers passed in and out, answering, under the thump, "Are you with Conway?" Conway, Conway, Conway seemed written upon every sheet before me, and the ink-sand spilt upon the board spelled out the marplot's name. The air was heavy with rumors. The aides frowned as they whispered. On the second night blue devils dwelt in every nook and cranny of the house. It was said that General Washington, nagged and goaded past endurance, was about to break his spurs and send his sword to Congress.

For secrecy's sake I had been banished to a desk in the attic, but on the third morning it was so cold that I took my work down into the office, hoping for a quiet hour by the fire. No sooner had I opened the door than I regretted my boldness. There by the window stood the chief, twiddling his fingers in

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perplexity and looking towards the snow-covered huts that sheltered the troops of McIntosh. Anon he would stride across the room, and then would halt before the fire, kick the fagots, finger the tongs, and walk back again to his window. He was enrapt; that I knew, because though he looked towards me he did not see me, or if he saw me he regarded me no more than if I had been a stool or a chair or a table. Something engaged him deeply. What it was I knew not. Whilst he was in this state of mind a knock at the door disturbed him. "Come in," said he, sharply. A tall, black-haired youth put his head in and said with dignity, "Your commands for York, if you please, sir." "Wait awhile, Anderson," said the General. The youth withdrew. He was the confidential express rider between camp and Congress. The General went to his desk, wrote a letter, sanded it, and read it over from beginning to end. Then he went back to the window and looked out upon the icicles that hung down from the eaves. He appeared to be counting them, and to be counting them over and over,—not once, not twice, but twenty, thirty, forty times. I feared lest the "scratch, scratch, scratch" of my quill might disturb him, and wished myself at the North Pole or the Equator, or anywhere but in that room. He went back to his desk, took up the sheet he had written upon, stepped to the fireplace, put the letter between the teeth of the tongs, and held it in the fire until it was charred. Then he came over to my desk and said, "Mr. Lankford, let me teach you how to sharpen a quill. You make the wrong stroke. Cut this way."

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He took up a goose-quill, shaved it, and cut the point with a clean, firm, fine stroke.

"You see how it is done," said he.

I bowed, with my face on fire.

Then he went to his desk, yawned, and wrote a second letter. This he sanded and sealed. Then he knocked on the floor with the point of his scabbard and Anderson came in.

"Take this," said he, "to the President of Congress, and deliver it with your own hand."

Anderson bowed and disappeared.

Again the General tapped on the floor. "Billy," he said, as soon as his valet had turned the knob, "saddle 'Blueskin,' and tell the gentlemen I will ride alone."

Then he buckled on his spurs and strode out of the room.

When he had ridden off, his aides came in with a rush.

"What did he do? What did he do?" asked Laurens, excitedly, seizing me by the arm.

I wrote in answer, "He taught me how to point a quill."

"Ah!" said Hamilton, "'tis done. Did you not observe the haste with which Anderson mounted his roan? 'Tis done. I tell you, Laurens, the knot is cut; 'twill be Washington or Gates. And I am satisfied as to which it will be."

At nine o'clock on the evening of that day tranquillity prevailed throughout the house. The Virginian sat in his accustomed place by the fire, deep in meditation. General Knox, a guest of the evening,

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was likewise in an untalkative mood. My Lord Stirling had made his adieux a half-hour before. As for the young gentlemen of the household, they had dined heavily in celebration of their chieftain's challenge to Congress, and all of them, save Hamilton, were now lodged for the night.

What was in Washington's mind no one could tell; perhaps, having crushed the Conway nettle, his palm now felt a smart from the pricking of squeezed needles.

Whilst he thus sat, with his fingers interlocked, his elbows thrust out so as to bear upon the arms of his deep-cushioned, high-backed leathern chair, and with his eyes bent upward as if busy with some object above the mantel; whilst he was thus outwardly at ease, but, as I fancied, inwardly in stress of thought, there came a faint click of the latch at the door of the secret vestibule.

At this sound the General let a glance go that way, but he did not move his limbs; nor do I think he then suspected foul play. Certainly, none other of those present gave attention to the matter, for General Knox seemed as if about to journey to the Land of Nod, Colonel Hamilton was engrossed in work, and I, his Jack o' the Quill, was letting my pen run as rapidly as it would go, being not a little flattered with my surroundings and soothed by the serenity of all about.

A hickory log blazed up in such a way as to cast too hot a flame for the General's face, and he put a hand up to screen his cheek, when something he then saw, or some thought that had all at once stirred his

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mind, caused him to leave his chair, slip into the hall, and thence silently into the other room, where I heard a bolt snap as he turned a key. In an instant he was back again in the office, and he immediately strode towards the secret vestibule, the door of which he strove to open. His act served as the signal for an astonishing stir. It was plain that some one was on the other side of the door holding hard to the knob, whilst, as we could see, the General was using his full strength in a tug upon the inner knob.

Knox, crying, "What have we?" sought to bring his weighty person into position for combat at close quarters, but tripped over the tongs and fell sprawling upon the earth.

Hamilton, crying, "I will help you, sir!" sprang to the side of his chief; but, for my part, there I sat like a dolt whilst the two gentlemen by main strength wrenched the door wide open and disclosed the object of the flurry.

It was a spy, who, when he saw himself thus cornered, gave a wild, shrill ululation, whereat there was a scamper as of hurrying feet in the hall and in the rear of the house. "Come out!" commanded the General. The fellow bounded from the vestibule and struck the General upon the chest as a whirling acrobat strikes the pad placed to break his fall. "Call—the—Life-Guard!" said the General, clutching the spy with one hand, while with the other he reached towards a rack for his pistols.

In execution of this order, Hamilton threw up a window, leaped out into the snow, and sounded the alarm. I, too, sprang out, being now recovered from

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my surprise and eager to distinguish myself. As I alighted upon my feet I caught sight of a man sidling along by the log kitchen. "Here," thought I, "is my chance;" and I ran in that direction, hot-foot and precipitately, intending to seize whomsoever I might come upon. As I rounded the kitchen I saw my fugitive dodge into a little lean-to at the north end of the house,—a sort of shed used for the double purpose of storing wood and screening the door of the great bake-oven.

Into this place I ran, full tilt and slapdash; but, instead of becoming a captor, I myself was made captive. I had given chase like a lion; I was trapped like a rabbit. I was seized with a clutch that felt to me as sharp and savage as a steel trap feels to a foolish wild thing when it springs the teeth that clamps it and holds it and pins it down to earth. The spy who seized me threw me savagely against a heap of kindling-wood,—hurled me so violently that I saw stars,—and, as I lay flat on my back, he gripped me at the Adam's apple till I must have turned blue in the face.

"Sh-sh-sh-h-h," said the fellow who thus held me, speaking in a whisper barely above his breath; "tie him cuff and shin; tie him to stay tied, I say! Make quick work of it. We must get out o' this."

I felt the cut of a rope in the skin of my wrists and likewise round my ankles.

"Sh-sh-sh-h-h!" said he who had first spoken; "listen all! This is a minnow we've caught, and he's as dumb as a fish. He can't say his prayers, much less shout. We've roped him tight, and now

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we'll leave him. Puss, here, won't mew,—the devil's gagged him for us!"

There was a husky chuckle from the man's listeners.

"Another twist there and a hard knot!" continued the speaker, who, as a fact, was the infamous Fitzpatrick himself; "a hard knot, I say; fast bound's fast found. Now for a skip to the Schuylkill; if the guards pop, drop and slide!"

Fitzpatrick opened the door of the shed and peered out into the night. "Here," thought I, "is my chance;" so I began to kick and squirm and roll among the sticks of wood with the sole purpose of making noise enough to draw the attention of any guardsman who might perchance be on the lookout between the house and the river.

It was an error of zeal, and I paid for my error a thousandfold.

No sooner had I begun to kick and twist than Fitzpatrick, turning with hiss and curse, again clutched me by the throat.

"Knife him!" said he. "Cut his gullet for him; slash his d—d windpipe!"

"No, no," said one of the spies. "We might slice off your hand, cap. Chuck him in here and be done wi' him." The monster, unfastening the iron door of the oven, swung it outward, and then with a low, quick, hissing "one, two, three," they cast me head-foremost in.

Stunned though I was from the violence with which my head struck the wall at the farther side of the oven, I heard the clank of the door as the

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wretches closed it upon me, and pinned it fast with an iron bolt. Instantly the heat became suffocating. A rabbit trapped in a box has a cruel fate, but it has room to vent its fright in, leaping from end to end, and it also has sweet air to breathe; but I was horribly cramped for room to twist my limbs, and still more horribly shut in from air.

I knew that in such increasing heat I could not retain my senses for a minute's space, nor my life much longer than a minute.

My desperation was so acute that I at first beat about in a frenzy. Then, holding my breath, I summoned up the faculties of my reason.

I lay upon the flat of my back, with my shoulders braced against the stones at one end of the oven and my feet thrust against the stones at the other end. Thus placed, I thought, a man is capable of exerting enormous power. "If I dash my brains out against the wall at my head," I reflected, "it will not matter a pea's weight; if I move the stone at my feet even so much as a hair's-breadth, I may move it farther."

So, with the blood trickling out at the corners of my mouth, I doubled up my body and bent my bones and my muscles in one concentrated effort to force the walls; with a madness of strength never before known to me, I gave a long, hard, frenzied lunge.

By the shine of heaven's stars! In so far from splitting my skull at one end of the oven, what did I do but dislodge a stone at the other end!

The mortar that had originally bound the stone in

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place, being subjected so long to heat, had cracked and split and the stone had become so free and loose that it gave way under the violence of my lunge, and fell as a trap-door falls in when one touches its secret spring.

At the fall of the stone, cool air came in with a rush, and I drew a strengthening, sweet breath of it. Then I hastened to work my body through the opening. How long it took me to get out of the oven I cannot, for the life of me, tell. Sometimes, in thinking it over, I count up the moments into many minutes, but at others I say to myself, "Why, Lankford, you were out before you could count ten."

I certainly got out as quickly as I could; and I did not stop to think where I was going, or whether I would have a fall, or at what spot on earth or below I should bring up.

But I know that I did fall, and that I brought up face down in a pool of water. How delicious to me it was to splash about in that pool after the suffocation I had undergone!

I got upon my feet and shuffled along the wall of the place. "This," said I, "is a part of the cellar; I shall soon come to the stairs, and, though hands and feet are fast, I know I can climb the steps and knock hard enough to bring somebody to the door."

I was so jubilant that I felt a more than mortal ability; I felt that I could climb the skies and knock at old St. Peter's gate. But as I passed around the walls, counting the corners as I progressed, my jubilation shrank into distress. And when I had come to the fourth corner that distress was absolute. This,

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then, I thought, is not a part of the cellar; 'tis a pit, an oubliette, a hole without an opening, unless it be a secret opening known to the man who dug it here.

Then I remembered that I had heard years before of certain secret pits dug by early settlers all up and down the Schuylkill Valley, as places of refuge in the event of sudden incursions by savages. Scores of houses were thus fitted with secret cellars; why not this one, which had been built during the ominous time just before the French and Indian war, when tomahawks were found sticking in the heart of saplings within arrow-shot of populous cities?

But such hiding-pits, I argued, usually had underground passages leading to the river, and not only that, but passages leading up into the rooms above.

This thought encouraged me greatly. I moved along the walls once more, feeling with hands as well as feet for signs of an opening. By and by my feet did come to an opening,—the passage to the river,—but it was filled with water, and could be attempted only by a fish. I moved on around, feeling with my hands as I went. This time I found an iron door, and thumped and thumped upon it till my fists were sore. Again and again I thumped, but there was no response. I knew very well why no answer came, for I remembered that into the steep, unused stairway leading up from the door had been thrown chests and bundles and packages of baggage belonging to the General,—such baggage as he wished to be stowed out of the way till the opening of the spring campaign. I was in a pit that led up into the house, but I was none the less trapped. I was, then, not much

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better off than I had been in the oven. There I should have been baked to death in a few moments; here I must perish in a few hours, or in the course of a few days, at best.

CHAPTER V.

UNDER THE HEARTH-STONES.

WELL, sir, or miss, or madam, as the case may be, there I was, down under the ground,—hands tied, feet tied, tongue tied. I was fast trapped, barred under, bolted down, clinched in, sealed up. Right atop of me I heard the sound of scuffling feet, the sharp “Halt!” of the sergeant of the guard and the “thump, thump, thump” of musket butts upon the floor as the men grounded arms. I heard the General’s command, “Seize your prisoner!” and I even caught a note of jubilation in Hamilton’s cry,—

“We’ve captured two more of the scoundrels, sir!”

Then I heard the beat of heels and the squeak of shoe leather as the guardsmen filed out and marched off with their prisoner.

Glancing in the direction whence these sounds had come, I caught sight of a ray of light thrusting itself down through a tiny crack in the foundation stones of the fireplace. This fairy finger of light pointed to a crevice or ledge in the upper part of the pit wall. How I struggled to hoist myself to that ledge! Long, long I fought for it, but I did not gain it by

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fighting. I gained it only by putting one to two and two to three; for in the still of midnight, when all sounds had ceased overhead, I waded into the middle of the pit, and, as I waded, my feet touched against some loose fragments of rock. I shuffled the stones along in front of my toes to a point at the wall's edge under the crevice, and then, squatting and using the swollen but still active fingers of my rope-entwined hands, piled one stone upon another till I had made a stepping-place of a height sufficient to enable me to swing my body up into the crevice. When I had come to the beam of firelight I made love to it very fondly, like a brain-cracked Romeo. It seemed such a friend to me that I indulged in the folly of fondling it and of passing my lips up and down it. I let it fall upon the brown of my coat and kissed the patch of gold it made, even as a miser kisses the tiny metallic sun in whose narrow, mean orbit he swings,—swings as if he were a whole world in himself and his fellow-creatures merely senseless, unfeeling midges.

As between the pit itself and my abiding-place in the wall thereof the latter was by far the less torturous. I chose to linger in it partly because of the warmth from the hearth-stones, partly because it was drier there than anywhere else in my dungeon, and for the further reason that the place gave promise of something in the nature of human companionship. Though the room above had served as the kitchen of Potts, the iron-master, it was now used as the dining-room of the Commander-in-Chief. But as its gaping fireplace, in which swung two iron cranes, gave forth a heat greater than was to be found anywhere else in

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camp, and as it was well cut off from every other part of the house, it naturally became a snug retreat for persons who wished to talk in privacy and with comfort. At meal-time it was a place of conviviality; between meals it was a cabinet for the exchange of secrets.

Did I listen to these secrets? Did I? And, pray, why did I not? Heaven help me! I was not only mortal, but deemed myself *in articulo mortis*. Yes, I listened as sharply as I could. At first I despised myself for listening; but I could not stuff my ears with cotton, and, having made up my mind that I must perish, I soothed my conscience with the thought that I was justified in partaking of information which, so far as I was concerned, must die with me. I have heard upon good authority that a certain gentleman, then Secretary to Congress, and likewise hand in glove with the Board of War, as well as with the Conway conspirators, has since burned his papers—burned them with beneficence prepense—lest their contents should ruin the political careers of many men now of great fame; yes, not only ruin them politically, but so scandalize their families that the finger of infamy would be pointed towards the innocent.

Nor shall I now be so mean as to reveal aught that would do harm to the living or render uneasy the ghosts of the dead. Yet, I may truly say, I learned more of the ways of man and learned more of the workings of the war while in that pit than I had ever before known. It was as if the Sphinx herself were inoculated with the poison of garrulity.

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Before that experience I had been a poor rustic, albeit much in conceit of myself; now I flattened myself upon the broad of my back and breathed out in my thoughts, "What a world! What a world!"

For know you that I, Lankford the dumb, but with both ears as good as any ever on the sides of a man's head, while in the pit learned the innermost secrets of the Revolution. I heard the General himself read aloud the long roll of his enemies; I heard him say that he feared the ambition and avarice of his fellow-countrymen tenfold more than he feared the armies of Great Britain. I heard him declare that even the intrigues of such adventurers as Conway hurt him less than the practices of the engrossers,—those patriots of the commissary who bought up and held back food and forage from his starving army solely for the purpose of enriching themselves.

It may seem strange that, since I could hear understandingly whatever was spoken overhead, I should have been unable by kick or knock to make those above hear me. Yet, I assure you, I pounded with head and heels till I was sore. Yes, I did my best to make myself heard, and I even tried to get at my pocket-flint in order that I might set the house on fire. What did I not do in my desperation! But I was in the clinch of ill-fortune, and, thus helpless, could only listen. I spent my first night in fretting and agonizing. Not a wink did I sleep. I did not feel hunger until the morning, when I heard the servants preparing the table for breakfast. The negroes were talking, as only negroes can talk, about the exciting incidents of the night before. From

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them I learned that the two spies spoken of by Colonel Hamilton had been caught by life-guardsmen at the river's edge, and that all three of the prisoners were to be gibbeted in the presence of the army at noon that day.

At breakfast, likewise, the sole topic was the spies. I listened to every word that was said; I hoped that a good word would be uttered in my praise.

Alas! how I was deceived! One of the aides whom I had numbered as among my friends was the first to mention my name.

"General," he said, "I have a suspicion that the dumb fellow, Lankford, was not dumb at all; I conceive, sir, that he was in league with the spies."

"Very likely," answered the General. "I observed him closely, and saw nothing suspicious about him; but I may have been deceived. If he were leagued with the rascals, he played the part of snake in the grass with rare skill. Who told you of his duplicity?"

"One Laffoon, a bombardier,—a whimsical fellow, but shrewd. Lankford, I could swear, is in full cahoot with the gang of spies. One of them, 'tis said, is on the point of confession."

"We are to examine him here at nine o'clock," said Colonel Hamilton.

Whereat the men above arose from the table and went out of the room.

My thoughts may be imagined. I felt the bitterness of the wronged,—the man maligned. I shed tears of rage and sorrow and despair.

A little while after the clock in the General's office

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had struck the hour of eight I heard in the room above the thwack of heel-taps, the scraping of chair legs, and the hearty "Here we are, gentlemen," of my Lord Stirling. "I nominate General Knox as the president of the conference," he added.

"Please to sit in the chief's seat at the head of the table, General Knox," suggested Hamilton; "should you need a gavel to rap us to order, you'll find there on the shelf at your elbow the spoon with which the chief stirs the punch."

A laugh went round and round as the spoon was thumped against the bare board.

"Sir," said Stirling, "I would wish Colonel Hamilton to inform us of certain facts which I understand he is privy to."

Just then I heard a "lum tum, secrets, hey!" and I knew that my old friend, the brigadier, was one of the conferees.

"Colonel, you are called upon," quoth Knox.

Hamilton cleared his throat and spoke with such distinctness that I could almost fancy myself above instead of below the hearth-stones.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I will come straight to the point. The Commander-in-Chief has decided that, before you proceed with the examination of the spies, you ought to be made acquainted with a piece of news that has caused him much concern since its receipt by way of Beaufort, North Carolina, three days ago. This news comes in the form of a letter from Dr. Franklin. The letter is in cipher, but I have here a copy as written out for us by General Washington."

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A hum of voices sounded round the room. Then Hamilton read the following letter :

“PASSY, ye 6th of November, 1777.

“HONORABLE AND DEAR SIR,—I hold the Bordeaux post in order to inform you of an important piece of information just received by me from our secret correspondent in London. Mr. — warns us to be on our guard against one Littlejohn, a Maryland Tory, who has undertaken to execute a plan of bribery arranged by the British Ministry. The aforesaid Littlejohn is on the point of embarking for America, and it is reported that he is provided with £20,000 sterling in gold. He is to co-operate with Galloway, and the breath of suspicion is likewise upon a member of my Lord Carlisle’s Commission. He will try to undermine the army as well as Congress. This news is to be relied upon. It comes straight from the King’s closet through Mrs. W. The £20,000 is to be reinforced, ’tis said, with a second, third, and fourth sum of like proportions.

“B. F.”

“Twenty thousand pounds in gold!” exclaimed Knox; “and who did you say is to place it?”

“One Littlejohn, a Maryland Tory.”

“Littlejohn! There was a Maryland Littlejohn in my corps at the battle of Long Island,” put in Lord Stirling; “nothing has been heard of him since that fight, and he is down on the roll as a deserter.”

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"Was he a genteel fellow, one capable of enlisting the confidence of the Ministry?"

"Highly genteel and capable, but he was inclined to be insubordinate."

"A skulker?"

"No; he was brave enough, and did us good service, but I believe his people are all rank Tories, and I've no doubt he went to England after his desertion from our army."

"But," asked General Knox, "what direct bearing has this bribery business upon the spies who are to be examined this morning?"

"That is what I wished to come to," said Hamilton. "In the course of his inquiries into the Quaker Hall matter the General learned that this very Maryland Tory mentioned in the doctor's letter was present at that affair, and he wishes us to-day to draw out from the three men whether they are in the employ of Galloway and Littlejohn or whether they are in the pay of Sir William Howe."

"I see," said Stirling; "this opens up the matter in a new light. 'Tis striking nine now. The spies will soon be here."

"Well," said Knox, "we are ready for 'em. Colonel Hamilton, will you oblige us by conducting the examination?"

"Certainly," said Hamilton.

"Here is the first of the lot, sir," reported the major of the Life-Guards, ushering in a culprit. Never since man began to scuffle along in shoe-leather did mortal walk more heavily than this new-comer. The weight of his despair was in heaviest pressure at

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his heart; that I could tell with certainty, bestowed though I was low down among the bricks that cut off a portion of the sounds from above.

"Stand!" commanded the officer. "Dowdall, you may withdraw. Tell Hounsfield to hold in readiness the spy with the pock-marks. Fetch him next. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir," replied the guardsman, as he left the room.

"Prisoner," said Hamilton, "what is your true name?"

"Joe Boxer."

"Boxer, you are held as a spy, and you are in peril of the gibbet. Do you wish to save your neck?"

"Yes, I would save my neck if I could; but, I dare say, you mean to choke me to death whether or no."

"Well, tell us who led you into this scrape."

"Mr. Itch."

"Itch for what?"

"Mr. Itch."

"Boxer, you court the rope. Do you wish to save yourself?"

"I want to save my wind, sir."

"Hum!" said my Lord Stirling.

"Lum, tum," said the brigadier.

Then came a break in the examination, during which I thought I could hear Hamilton walk over towards Knox and exchange whispers with him.

"Boxer," spoke up Hamilton, "we are satisfied that you have a deal of wit inside of your noddle, but you choose to fiddle when you ought to have sense

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enough to speak straight. Major, recommit this fellow, and let us examine another."

Out strode the heavy-footed Boxer and in came a second prisoner.

"What is your name?" asked Hamilton.

"Cæsar Cox, sir."

"Will you tell us why you have been caught in a camp where you do not belong?"

"I was like an ass, sir; I was led in with a halter."

"Hark ye! hark ye, now," spoke up the brigadier, "and he'll go out by a halter."

"Who led you in?" asked Hamilton.

"Captain Jim, sir."

"Captain Jim who?"

"Captain Jim Fitzpatrick."

"Of Chester County?"

"Yes, sir."

"And are you the Cæsar Cox who was in Chester jail for horse-stealing?"

"I am wearing his clothes, sir."

"And what was your object in coming into camp?"

"We came in to carry off the General."

"General Washington?"

"Yes, sir; to steal the biggest hoss in the country."

"And what did you intend to do with the General?"

"We had orders to stable him in the city, sir."

"Orders! Orders from whom?"

"From Captain Jim."

"And you were simply obeying Fitzpatrick?"

"Obeyin' orders, sir, and that's all I know."

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"Take him out, major," said Hamilton, "and let us have a look at the third prisoner."

"He affects stupidity, colonel," said Gibbs, "and is very stubborn."

"What is your name?" asked Hamilton, when the third man had been brought in.

"That's my business, Captain Cocklofty. You may call me Dan Dandruff, if it please you, and a devil of a lot of good may it do ye!"

"Dandruff, you are a vicious knave, but you have a chance to save your neck by telling us all about this business you've been engaged in. Now go ahead. Rattle off what you've got to say."

"I've got nothin' to say. You may hang me and be d—d, curse ye!"

"Take him out," said Knox.

"Yes," added Hamilton, "and fetch in Boxer; he blinked very curiously awhile ago, and may talk sensibly upon a second invitation. Boxer," he added, when that worthy had reappeared, "are you ready now to drop all quacking and tell us what we want to know?"

"First, sir, I wish you to tell me what is going to happen to me if I shoot straight."

"You will not be hanged."

"Thank God! I do so dread death. If you'll agree, sir, to send me west of the Susquehanna, I'll tell all I know."

"You shall go to Carlisle jail, there to stay till the end of the war."

"Well, sir, I'll tell all I know. Jim Fitzpatrick is head devil. He sent for me to meet him at Castle

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Rock the day after Christmas. I was then at my uncle's, in Uwchlan. When I got to the Rock I met Captain Jim and four others. He told me that he had got orders from Sir William Howe to carry off General Washington, and invited me to jine in the reward."

"And what was the reward?"

"One hundred guineas in gold to every man."

"And you agreed to join?"

"I agreed to jine, and we wormed our way into camp the night of the big storm."

"Was there anybody back of the business except the persons named?"

"Yes, sir; I think there was."

"Name the man."

"Mr. Galloway."

"Anybody else?"

"Yes, sir; I think there was,—a man just come over the sea."

"Was his name Pettyjohn?"

"No, sir; Littlejohn."

"And what part did he play? Has he been with you?"

"Three strangers, all dandy-like, were with us at the Rock."

"What else have you to tell us?"

"Well, sir, you ought to know that Captain Jim has relays clean to the Bald Friar."

"Do you know the stopping-places?"

"Yes, sir."

"You may tell the General about the relays when he questions you as to Fitzpatrick."

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"Boxer," interposed Knox, "you will pass with the major into General Washington's office. Talk to His Excellency just as you have talked to us, and you will save your bacon."

"Thank you, sir," answered Boxer, "and thank the other kind sirs of you."

And with that the heavy-stepping spy quit the room.

"Colonel," cried Knox, "I envy you your power with the flail of examination."

"Zooks!" said the brigadier; "he got at the kernel of truth pretty well, for a fact."

And then the scuffling and shuffling of feet and the scraping of chair legs announced the termination of the inquest.

But very soon the room again became tenanted; two whisperers were in confab; two men with secrets to impart were tongue to ear above. Muffled sounds at first came to me, but as the speakers made progress in the matter of their discourse their voices became audible. In a little while each spoke with confidence. It was quite another matter.

"My dear Digsworthy," said one, "they've all gone to the hanging except the General, and he's off for a ride, so we have the whole house to ourselves. Now you may speak plainly, and the plainer you talk the truer shall be my conveyance of your message."

"Well, I will proceed then to tell you of the new programme. The world has turned over several times since the old Continental Congress met."

"Yes; and new methods are in vogue."

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"And new men must come in. Washington is of the past."

"He buried himself at Brandywine. The new man is—Gates?"

"You must guess again."

"And how may I guess? Aside from Gates, I know not a soul who is capable of leading the army."

"Have you forgotten Charles Lee?"

"Lee! Lee! Lee! Do you mean to speak of Lee? Why, sir, he is in captivity!"

"But he is more active in captivity than Washington is in freedom. Let me tell you of this rising star, Lee. He outmasters Cæsar in strategy. He, a captive in New York, has affected a cunning lukewarmness towards America, has given it out that he purposely laid himself open to seizure by the British, and has whispered it in the ears of Clinton that a Lady Gaw is fresh to him from the king with papers of pardon."

"And the viceroyship of the conquered colonies, perhaps?" quoth the other, with a bite of sarcasm in his tone.

"No doubt, though Sir Henry would not relish the idea. But listen to the new scheme of the war: Lee has gained the confidence of the British. He has proposed a plan of campaign that is to enable England to slash open a grand artery of these colonies so that we may bleed to death. But 'tis a trick of Ulysses, a stratagem from Olympus."

"Then he is true, and intends to lead 'em off in 'chase of a wild goose'?"

"While we, knowing their line of action to a dot,

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are to turn at the nick of the grand campaign, put a quietus upon the invaders, re-seize our capital cities, and flourish aloft the scalp of victory in the sight of the world."

"But the details? Jove, man! This may be a false chart for us rather than for the enemy. Washington would not think of tolerating Lee."

"Per contra, my dear sir, Washington is loudest in praise of Lee, and is now negotiating his exchange for Prescott."

"But does he accept Lee's plan of action?"

"No; that is a point I wish to score right here. Lee has put upon paper two separate plans. Listen! One is for Congress; that is all right. One is for Washington's eye. This last is absurd upon its face; but, while pooh-poohing it, Washington is extremely desirous of obtaining the services of Lee to command a wing of the army. Lee has world-wide fame as a soldier, and has flattered Washington with numerous secret confidences; 'tis said, indeed, that the Lady Gaw I have spoken of was a visitor in this house no longer than an hour ago, bringing from the captive general a new scheme of conduct with respect to Conway."

"'Tis a deep game."

"But Lee has the winning card."

"I begin to think so."

"Now, listen further. Washington is most anxious to be rid of Conway."

"Yes, 'tis patent."

"And Lee wishes to put his foot upon the shoulder of the young French marquis."

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"In order that he may climb higher?"

"In order that he may unhorse Washington, and end his campaign and the war with the plume on his own head."

"But what does Lee propose to do with Conway?"

"Lee has created a splendid mirage above the lakes and the St. Lawrence. It is a New France. Old France is to join us in the war, and the price of the alliance is to be the restoration of Canada. The Adamses, of Massachusetts Bay; Colonel Richard Henry Lee, of Virginia; and General Mifflin, of this State, call it glorious bait. Every wide-awake delegate at Yorktown has broken off from the Gates-Conway cabal, and the cry is now 'Lee and the French alliance.' Dr. Franklin may be at the bottom of the whole grand plan, for all I know, but Lee has the credit of it. With France, Spain, and Holland at our back, we can win independence. France is to regain all that she lost in the last war."

"And Washington? Must he go under?"

"Washington must go under. He has done well, but not well enough. 'Heaven has been determined to save your country,' said Conway, 'or a weak general and bad counsellors would have ruined it.'"

"And what about Conway and Lafayette?"

"Oh! that is a little detail of the grand scheme. The cry of New France is to be sprung at once. Lafayette is to be led off from Washington with the sop of glory. He is to be sent upon a Canadian expedition, and Conway, who, to all intents and purposes, is a Frenchman, is to go with him."

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"But what does Lee care for Old France or New France?"

"Not a ha' copper. Lafayette is to be despatched on a wild-goose chase; Conway is to go with him; Gates is to be given the cold shoulder."

"And Lee?"

"Why, Lee will be in command of this army before midsummer."

"One thing more,—a woman. You spoke of a Lady Gaw. Who is she?"

"Let me whisper it,—let me whisper it, and then let us break off this talk, for I hear 'em coming back from the hanging of the spies. Let me whisper it,—Lady Gaw is a daughter of—Lee!"

"Charles Lee!"

Now, for my part, soon after I had heard the chime of twelve marking my second midnight in the pit, I had fallen into what I had hoped would be my sleep of death; but I was awakened by a palm stroke against the stones and a whisper resounding in hollow susurrations through the vaulted chamber. I listened. Again I heard the thrice-repeated tapping of a hand, a "whist, ye!" and a "chut-chut," made low with the lips like a squirrel-call in the thick of the forest.

I was now not only thoroughly awake, but freshly nerved to action. I pushed and rolled myself along until I had come to the edge of the ledge, and then I let myself fall into the waters of the pit. In the midst of the splash I heard a voice crying, "Lankford, is that really you, my poor fellow? Wait till I strike a spark into this piece of tow!"

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As the spark caught, I looked up and Littlejohn looked down.

"It is so," quoth he; "it is so as sure as my mother's in heaven! Bound hand and foot and fast in a blind cellar! Is there no way for you to get out save by this opening?" he asked.

I shook my head.

"There is a door," he added, "but it is bolted; is that the case?"

I nodded yes.

"Then," said he, "the only way for me to get you out without raising the roof off the house of the High and Mighty is to pull you out through the oven here. Let us try it. Stand close under, my friend, and I'll reach down and try to catch hold of your hair."

I stood as he had directed, and felt his finger-tips brush against my head, but knew that he could not quite reach me.

"Tiptoe!" said he, "and I'll stretch another point." He reached down again, but this time lost his hold above and came tumbling into the pit.

He laughed.

"Well," said he, "we're in a fix; but it won't take us long to get out of it. Let me cut your bonds."

He slashed the ropes that bound my hands and feet. As he did so I sought to put my fingers over his mouth to bid him be silent, but I was too late. He roared out immediately at the top of his voice:

"Ho, ye above there! Open a way for us! Hey, there! Ho, ye! Ho, ye! Come open the door!"

I heard those who had been asleep by the fireplace

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above scuffling upon their feet. There was a clamor of voices.

Littlejohn beat hard with the hilt of his sword against the iron gate. Such a scampering! Such a shuffling! Such a slamming of doors!

Just then we heard the voice of the General. His speech was composed, but sharp and commanding.

"What is the cause of this alarm?" he asked, as he strode across the floor.

"We don't know exactly what it is, General," replied the valet; "the sounds were loud but mysterious."

"'Twas an owl, I doubt not," retorted Washington.

"No, no," bellowed Littlejohn, lustily. "We are here in the cellar below you. Open up, open up, in heaven's name!"

Again there was wild scampering overhead.

"Be still!" commanded the General. "Who are you below there?"

"My name is Littlejohn. My comrade's name is Lankford. Open a way for us for pity's sake."

Then followed a lull,—a cessation of all noises that to me was pregnant with meaning; but Littlejohn, unsuspecting, talked on right merrily. "We shall be out of this in a minute or two," he said. "I must now give myself up and tell my story here in camp. I had wished an easier plunge, but it's all one, I imagine, and I'm happy to be of service to you."

We heard the servants removing the baggage from the stairway, and by and by the door of the pit was opened. We stepped out and ascended the stairs,

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Littlejohn still talking in a lively, happy strain. But no sooner had we reached the top of the pit stairs than those above sprang upon us, crying, "Rats, rats, rats! Here are the spies. Here they are, sir; here are the spies!"

The negro valet of the General, eager to distinguish himself, sprang upon Littlejohn and, clutching him underhold, strove to trip him.

Littlejohn, gripping the valet, lifted him upon his hip and hurled him against the wall with such an angry and savage fling that the negro lay limp and senseless upon the floor.

"Seize the scoundrel!" cried the General, fumbling at his scabbard, which clanked against the stones as he strode forward. "Lay him by the heels!"

The guard dashed upon Littlejohn and pinioned his arms.

"I am no scoundrel, sir," said he, looking straight into the General's eyes; "I am sorry if I hurt your negro, but I do not like the close smell of such. He should have kept his distance, sir."

But the Commander-in-Chief seemed not to hear the high-strung rejoinder. His face was red, and he stood with head aloft, his eyes looking only upon the sergeant of the guard. "Take these wretches in custody," said he; "strip them of their weapons and papers, and convey them to the office of the provost. Tell him to ball their ankles and handcuff them. Also search the pit they came out of, and see if there is a passage that leads from it to the river."

The sergeant bowed.

"Custis," continued the General, turning to one of

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his servants, "bring Billy into my office; and you, boys, fetch candles, and one of you my lancet."

The sergeant stripped us of our weapons, money, and papers. "Now," said he, "come along both of you! Hoof it, I say! Don't open your jaws. Walk steady. If you offer to run, we'll brain you at the first step."

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE PINCH OF IT.

So out we went. It was pitch dark and cutting cold; for the moon was now down, and a frosty smother of fog swept up from the river. Not that I minded the cold. Oh, no! My heart was hot with mortification, rage, the sense of trampled decency. I was shaken with sobs. Tears tasted salt on my lips. But, as we labored along through the snow, I saw the sparkle of a little star. It beamed down through a rent in the murk, and acted upon me as true magic from the skies. I felt as a blind man feels who takes a leap back again into the blessed light. Why should I complain? Was I not infinitely better off than when in the pit? Here now I was above ground,—yes, above ground! How foolish, therefore, to whine against that fate which had lifted me up as from the bottom of a well,—from the depth of the grave itself!

By the time we reached the forge, which adjoined the provost guard's, my emotions were sunk in calm.

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Even the fire with which my chains were riveted blessed me with its warmth, and when at last we were thrust into the prison itself, a sense of ease came over me, and I thanked heaven that I was safely chained among my fellow-men. It was an ill-smelling place; yet, of all the prisoners there, we could not but regard ourselves as the vilest, since we alone were in chains. Our noisy entry, the curses of the guards, the snarls of such wretches as were trodden on, made pandemonium for awhile; but as soon as we had been led out of the general prison and thrust into the inner jail, the poor devils whom we had disturbed sank again into sleep.

We were now in the tightest limbo of the army,—a small room heavily walled. It was a prison within a prison, and we two had the place to ourselves. A fire glowed sullenly in a narrow chimney-place. I sank down at one end of the hearth, Littlejohn at the other. He lifted his irons between his legs, rested his head against the logs, and shut his eyes. As I watched him I asked myself, "Who is this man? What is his secret? Was he really at the bottom of the plot to carry off Washington? Is he the king's bribe-giver? Yes," thought I, "he is a smooth devil, and here I am chained to the same stake with him!"

Then I felt a pinch of remorse. Twice had he done me vital service. Was gratitude so empty, then, that I owed him nothing? And, if he were a knave, why was he so gentle? I elbowed a fresh brand upon the fire that I might look upon him by its freshened light. My heart softened. His face was the perfect, fair countenance of nobility. What

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pathetic histories were stamped upon it! His creased forehead, his sunken cheeks, his drawn lips,—all spoke in unmistakable appeal to me. If he were a villain, what cruelties of the hard old world had cut this special pattern out?

Another thing stirred my pity. Above his left temple the hair was clotted with blood. He had been hurt in the scuffle at head-quarters. It was plain enough that a spiked heel had been set into the flesh as far as to the skull.

As I looked I saw the shine of his eyes. They were gleaming upon me 'twixt half-closed lids.

"Well, Lankford," said he, "why are you squinting at me so hard? You're wondering what I've been up to since I took French leave of you in the gorge, aren't you?"

I nodded yes.

"I thought so. Well, I don't mind telling you, I'm sorry Pruitt came at me as he did. I shot him because I didn't want to be shot myself. *Lex talionis*!—a monstrous law, Lankford, framed in hell! But what's a man to do when others hunt him and try to have his heart out? Tell me that."

I hung my head.

He laughed in a bitter way. Then he took on his habitual look of courtesy, and fell back into a gentle tone,—

"But that's neither here nor there. You're saying to yourself, 'Who the devil is this fellow I've got into such a scrape with? Why did Pruitt denounce him? Why did the great General awhile ago treat him as a thing to be stamped on?' Before God, my

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friend, I do not myself know. I am strangely abused. Yet I must tell you of certain secrets, begging your confidence."

I stopped him, writing in the ashes so recklessly that hidden coals burned my fingers, "Listeners!"

"What do I care for listeners?" said he; "I wish I had the ear of the whole army, the whole country; nay," he added, "I fear not the world. But the only listener is there."

He moved his head towards the opposite side of the cell. I looked and saw in the partition wall a little ring of iron.

"That," said he, "is the muzzle of a musket. The musket is loaded with slugs. The cock is up. The man who fingers the trigger is not only listening, but he is watching us through a chink in the wall."

I felt the blood go out of my face.

"Pruitt gave you my name," he went on, "and part of my record. I did serve in the Blues and in the Macaronis. That was right; but Pruitt didn't tell you, did he? how I led the forlorn hope on the Gowanus. See this!"

He spread open his shirt and showed me a round, blue scar on his chest.

"I got this in that Gowanus fight. The shot went in here, and when they've hung me, if you'll look at my back, you'll see where it passed out. I led my company across that stream eleven times! Eleven times, I say, and I tell you it was hell eleven times multiplied! If my Lord Humbug, who thinks himself a Scotch earl, even as Alicia Gaw thinks herself an English lady, had a memory as long as his queue, he

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would credit me with good work that day. He ought to come to me now, give me his hand as a comrade and lift me up from where I lay—maligned, disgraced, most damnfully beaten down!”

“But why?” I wrote, impatiently; “why are you so?”

“Why? This is why: After that battle I was nearly dead. I barely had breath enough left to beg for a furlough. I went to my home on the Tred Avon, to the eastward of the Chesapeake. I had hardly stretched myself in my bed, when my own father seized upon me and bore me forcibly on board a ship which sailed that night for England. This seems strange to you, doesn’t it? But listen. My father was a neutral. He was a rich man. He owned a plantation in the West Indies. I think I may say that before he began to part with his slaves he must have owned a thousand of them,—he and a certain silent trader.”

Having paused for a moment, he resumed. “Yes, I will tell you who this silent trader was. It was Caleb Truax, the same Quaker who has been sent into exile by order of Congress. Truax also was a neutral. To be a neutral, you think, is to be a Tory. No! as God hears me, no! In my heart I know that my father was no Tory. I’ve lately heard that he died in London Tower, where he was thrust for treasonable utterances in behalf of this land where his son now sits in chains. But, mark you, there was a man back of my father,—my strong-willed, bitter, violent uncle,—a fearful cynic. He it was who counselled my father to flee to England. He it was who

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fretted my dear mother till life left her. He it was who cursed me when I joined the patriots. And it was he who persuaded my father to bear me off to the ship on the night they got away for England. I, for my part, did not go to England. Soon after we had passed the Capes our vessel was chased by a privateer, and we made off for the West Indian plantation of which I've spoken. There I escaped and hid in the mountains. When their ship had sailed,—I saw her sink in the offing before I stirred from my rocks,—I made my way in a Spanish brig to New Orleans. I could talk to you as long as I live (which will be ten hours, perhaps), on my wanderings, my hardships, the sores at my heart. I made my way up the Mississippi to St. Louis, and from there I have walked to this camp. You now understand why I wear this backwoods dress. But why, you say, do I also wear a false name? For a very good reason. When I reached Fort Pitt I was eager to learn the news from the East. I asked a thousand questions about the progress of the war. I read every printed scrap I could find. Now put it to yourself, Lankford, put it to yourself how I felt when, in glancing down a list of deserters posted in the fort, I saw my own name! Good God! I reeled, I fell! When I had got out into the forest I ran till my pierced lung began to bleed. I a deserter! Frankly, my friend, I confess to you—with blushes, if I could longer blush, with shame now and sorrow—I confess to you that I had looked upon myself as a hero. Yes, fool that I was, I thought I would be remembered and welcomed as the man who had led the forlorn hope

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on Long Island! Instead, at Bedford, I again saw myself posted in dishonor, and at York I learned that I was deemed both deserter and spy. That's the reason I took on my false name,—a foolish name, for it's the name of a little bird that flies among the marshes, where I hunted when a boy. And that's the reason I approached this camp in the night, afraid to give myself up because of the calumnies against me, yet driven to do so by my sense of right and decency."

After this Littlejohn was silent for a long time. I was greatly moved by his revelation, and sat gazing into the fire, though ever and anon glancing over my shoulder at the hollow ring of iron that eyed us from the wall.

By and by I heard a sorrowful laugh.

"As for Alicia Gaw," continued Littlejohn, "she is a strange creature. She puzzles me; she amazes me. 'Pon my soul, if the Queen of France had pounced down on me as this Miss Gaw did at the Quaker's I could not have been worse startled than I was! What the devil's in it I don't know! You remember the letter you gave me just before Pruitt came clawing at me like a catamount. Well, the point of the letter was that I should meet her at day-break near the King of Prussia. I asked myself, 'Why?' I could think of but one reason. As soon as I had joined her,—for, of course, I jumped at the chance of riding away from camp under such safe convoy,—I asked her whether she were not acting in behalf of a dear friend of mine. She cut me short, I can tell you. 'Get down into the bottom of the

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sleigh,' she said; 'quick! cover yourself with the bearskin! Your act last night makes you an outlaw. Do not dare, sir, on your life, to budge an inch!' When we came to the first picket she stamped me under her feet and cried out to her driver,—the same Hance Fuchslager whom you saw at the Quaker's,—'Speed along! speed along!' Once she said to me, 'You make a good footpan, sir!' But it was not until after we had entered a thick forest many miles from camp that she let me get up and sit beside her. Then her manner changed; her haughtiness vanished; she grew—most alluring. Yes, she tried her best to bewitch me."

Littlejohn paused and smiled at me sorrowfully.

"Lankford," he went on, "if we were not in this black scrape I wouldn't tell you these things. I'm no braggart dandy. For God's sake, no! What a strange world it is! You're not young; I'm not old; neither of us has ever been far away from the wilderness and maybe we don't know much, but, I tell you, I secretly despised that woman for the way she made up to me. I don't mean by touch of hand! Oh, no! I think if I, misinterpreting her alluring ways, had so much as breathed a bold breath upon her she would have shot me, or flashed a knife into me, or roped me to her runners and dragged me along in the snow behind her. I don't mean that she lacked the inner hedge of woman's dignity. Don't mistake me on that point! But, 'pon my soul! she shamed me by the gambler's air that was all about her. Her honey to me was wax.

"But you want to know what passed between us.

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Not much, except airy talk. When I saw that she, with her mask on, was bent upon cutting slyly into me, I, too, put up a mask. I fell into the drawling civilities. I spoke only with my head. It was thrust and parry for a long hour. Then we entered the debatable ground between the armies. The next man to halt us might be American or he might be British. She warned me of this, and told me she was about to pass through the lines. She asked me to accompany her. I leaped out of the sleigh. 'Who are you?' said I, 'and what are you that you should pass scot-free 'twixt camp and town?' She laughed in my face. 'You fool!' she cried, 'have you no fear of rebel hemp?' With that she was off, and I hurried away into a thicket of briars which here bordered the edge of the forest road. And now, Lankford," he whispered, "I've something else to tell you——"

He faltered; the muscles of his face worked; he crimsoned violently.

"I've come to a turn," said he, "when it is necessary for me to disclose a personal matter of extreme delicacy."

At this moment the door of the prison opened, admitting the officer of the provost. He viewed the room, examined our shackles, tested the bolts. Then he said, "It's daybreak. I will come for you when the court meets. You needn't expect anything to eat. We haven't a single bite for ourselves, much less for you. There's a Bible somewhere about the place, and if you want it sing out!"

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CHAPTER VII.

THE HIDDEN MAIN-SPRING.

WHEN the officer of the provost had thus again left us alone, Littlejohn said,—

“Did you take notice how lightly the fellow handled your chains,—how keenly he cut his eyes upon mine? My word for it, comrade, you may reassure yourself! You’re on thin ice, but it will hold; as for me, I’m already in. Zounds, yes! there’s a whirlpool ahead and I can hear the roar of it this minute!”

I lifted a hand deprecatingly.

“Thank you,” said he; “your will’s good. No, you can’t save me; but I’ll tell you by and by how you can serve me. Heretofore, Lankford, I’ve been drumming my lamentations into your ears. I’ve been telling you of the festers at my heart, now I’ll tell you of my heart’s joys.”

He paused, fixed his irons so that they might hurt him less, and bending over spoke softly into my ear: “You remember what I just said about Caleb Truax, my father’s partner. Well, the year the war broke out I visited him on business at Sweetbrier, his estate on the Schuylkill, near town. I went to take a pouch of gold; I fetched away with me his daughter’s love. I want you to say her name over and over in your head, so you won’t forget it. It’s Mary Truax,—Mary, daughter of Caleb. Will you remember?”

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I tapped my forehead, frowned, smiled.

"Yes," said he, "of course you will. Forgive me! I trust you fully. Heaven knows, Lankford, I love this Quaker maid! She's in my thoughts all the time. In the Gowanus fight I put Mary aside a while. Yes, 'tis true; I then lifted honor above my love. But latterly I've placed love before honor! That is why I came to camp warily as I did. On my way out of the back country I kept saying to myself, 'My first duty is to see Mary Truax.' Having seen her; having poured out to her my sorrowful apologies for absences long unexcused; having surrendered my soul to her,—having done these things before and in behalf of the one creature on earth adored by me,—why, then, please God! I would make my way to those in authority and surrender my inconsequential body, a thing of scars and certainly of little worth."

He paused in deep passion. Then, laughing, he exclaimed, "Alicia Gaw! Yes, I thought for a while that Alicia Gaw must have been prompted in her kindness to me by none other than Mary. While the Lady Alicia was baiting for me some strange, sharp hook, I was thinking of Mary. I could not help contrasting the two,—that bird of gaudy plumage and my own dove of the laurel hills! One so bold, the other so gentle; one so subtle, the other so like a child. Every witchery from Alicia's eye but fired the hope that my Quaker maid was still at Sweetbrier fields, which lay close beyond the forest through which we were passing. And, thank God! she was, Lankford. Thank God, she was!

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Now, it's queer that a man fixed as I am, with a halter sure to be his next stock, should find time to tell you how glad I was to see the red of the sun given back by the windows of her house! Yet I delight to tell of it. When I came in sight of Sweetbrier place the setting sun so glorified it I almost shouted. But I kept my peace. There was good reason for it. Not a hundred yards from me ran a pack in full cry, and following the hounds were a parcel of hunters, some afoot, some on horseback, and every soul of 'em in lobster red. I crouched in the evergreens. Beyond Sweetbrier lay the river, beyond the river the steeples of the city and the masts of British ships. As the sun hid, up peeped the moon. Then I ventured among the shadows and finally came to my journey's end."

Having remained silent for a brief space, Littlejohn again took up his confession.

"My tongue would fail me," said he, "if I should try to tell you of our meeting, even as my man's strength failed me then and left me prone before her like a pilgrim come to his cross. But I've said I must open my heart to you; I've told you I must beg of you kind service. What I want is for you to go seek out Mary Truax. You must find her. You must give her a message from me. Do you understand? Hand above heart!"

I affirmed solemnly, looking the sympathy I felt.

"You must tell her I loved her till death, and will meet her where God wills. Strange, you think, that I should wish this; but I confess to you, comrade, I did not tell Mary about my troubles here in camp.

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I told her of Pruitt's signals, but not of the shooting of Pruitt. I told her of Conway's trickeries, but not of my own fear of Washington. Yes, like a coward, I edged towards honesty and the devil tripped me. Don't spark your eyes at me, Lankford! I couldn't tell her of this miserable coil that now tightens so. It's you who must do it. You must repeat everything I've said to you. You must make my innocence as clear to her as day. But why, you say, did not I tell her? Well, it shamed me to think of it. I could not bear a doubting look from her eyes. Then, too, thoughts of another man came bitterly up. Now, Lankford, think of my situation at that moment. Remember how long a time we had been parted. Bethink you of her distress in behalf of her father. Burn into your heart how true my love is. Do this; take this view,—my view as I sat at her feet,—and you will understand why in the fleeting half-hour I spent with her I was slow to whistle up so black a wolf as this. Very likely I should have come to the matter in course of time, but suddenly there came leaping into the room a little fox, whose eyes burnt green as it sprang into Mary's lap and cuddled itself there for protection. I would have walked across the continent for the look that Mary gave me that instant. 'To the stairs! To the garret!' she cried, running ahead to show the way.

"The hounds were already yelping in the yard, and, curses on it, what did I see as I bolted after her but a soldier's face leering in at the window, his jaws already cracking apart to cry, 'Rebel! rebel!' I swore to myself, as I ran up the stairs, kissing my

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sweetheart's heels, that I'd keep clear of the British or make 'em take me finger by finger, sludge and cut. Once in their clutch, you see, every suspicion harbored against me here among my own people would turn to certainty as quick as water freezes. So, when we got up into the garret, both of us trembling and panting, I shot the bolt to and looked around for something with which to defend myself. Moonlight came in through a little round rose window in the gable. I tell you Mary was as white and beautiful as an angel, standing with me there, one hand flat upon my lips to deaden the heave of my breath, the other softly above my heart to stay its leaping. I kissed her palm away, and asked her if she could find for me a fighting-iron or stick or any death-dealing thing among the many objects stored under the slant of the shingles. She straightway ran to an ancient chest, upon which the moonbeams fell. 'Here,' she whispered, 'is a blade for thee. It has not been used this hundred years,—not since Hampden's day. I'll buckle the leather about thee. Thou must not suffer thyself to be taken!'

"'But if they beat me down?' I asked. She pointed to the window.

"Meantime, I, searching about with my eyes, had seen,—what think you, comrade? Why, simply a pair of rusty skates. I felt along the runners. They were good and strong and keen. It flashed upon me that if I could but gain the hard-encrusted snow they would lend wings to my feet. As I strapped them on, sounds of tramping, pounding, cursing, came from below.

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"Once more I embraced my love. I knew that no harm would be done her, but I was loath to leave her, even in the nick of death for me. I felt her bosom heave with the breath of doubt and fear and hope. Her arms clung tight about me.

"'Now, haste thee! haste thee!' she cried. 'Dost thou not hear them at the door? Go, I say, and fare thee well!'

"Thus blest in love, thus shod with iron, girt with hope and armed with my old Cromwellian hanger, I swung my body out through the window the very instant the redcoats burst in at the door."

Littlejohn was now speaking with fervor. A dark flush had spread as high as to his temples.

"In all my born days," he went on, "I never laid eyes on so shiny and fair a scene as I saw when I drew myself out of the dark mew of the garret into the vast of moonlight. I was wonder-struck! Ten feet or so beneath me lay a porch-top glittering with whitest ice. Below and beyond was a snow-filled garden space sloping towards an orchard, and the orchard itself was a shining mass of silver,—silver twig, silver tree-trunk, silver landside. Away below, still sloping towards the river, stretched a cleared declivity that fairly blazed with moonlight. I hung with my hands to the outer moulding for the skip of a second and then let go. I struck the roof, but it was a case of off as soon as on, and down I went into the garden. Would you believe it? I fell square upon the head of a guard, whose bayonet, like an icicle upside down, came within an inch of spearing me. 'Twas bad for the redcoat, I can tell

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you! He fell as if struck with the pole of an axe; but 'twas lucky for me, for I sprang up in a blink, vaulted the palings, and was well off before I heard a shot. Once in the open I squatted on my hams and sped in a cutaway scud down across the shining field for full a thousand feet. Mine was the spirit of exultation. I spoke my sweetheart's name aloud. Hot blood was in my heart. My hopes rode as high as the high-riding moon. I trailed the edge of my ancient blade upon the surface of the snow, guiding myself with it past brush and stone. Even as I broke through a fringe of evergreens near the river's edge I gloried in the crash and crackle and glitter of the millions of shattered ice spangles that flew from sedge and twig. Alas, Lankford! It's bold we are when our wings are working free and air and sky belong to us. But we're not always wise in freedom. For my part, I should have had sense enough to check myself as soon as I came among the cedars; but, though I knew the bluff as well as I knew anything, I went over the nib of it and fell sheer to the river. The stun I got was like the death-crack of a malled ox. How long I lay on the ice I don't know, but when I came to I cut the buckle to tease my muscles back to work, and was thankful enough to find them true.

"Then I made off up stream. My courage rose at every stroke. The glory of the night still challenged my spirit. There was magic in it, and Mary was the magician who had wrought the wonder. Glittering sleet encrusted everything within view,—the river, the sloping fields, the hill-tops, the house-

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tops, the forests,—and each flitting object was lit by the great round moon which swept the stars out with the shine of her raiment.

“ But while careering swiftly up stream, I heard a hallabaloo on shore. It was the hue and cry of the hunters. I felt that I had now become the fox. I glided forward resolved to play my new part as best I could. But at the first bend of the river I saw a sight that caused me to circle about and stand stock still. In mid-stream blazed a bonfire. To the right and to the left stood many persons, men and women. It was a party of merrymakers from the city. They shut in the river against me as if linked hand to hand across it to keep me back. Why such alignment? Did these people know of me? Had they been warned from Sweetbrier? On the other hand, thought I, they may be doing nothing under heaven but enjoying the ice and the moonshine and the gallantries of the moment. I laughed at my fears and skated towards the party, cutting figures as I went, whirling about, dancing, pirouetting, making believe to be one of them. Suddenly a pistol sounded, and, on the instant, a general shout was raised,—a vengeful, mocking shout. I saw the flash of swords, but I felt that I must run the gauntlet. Bitterness seized me. For them it was but an episode that helped out the romance of their romantic night. Here were the blades of Britain, the Tory belles of the town. They would kill me if they should catch me. Dare I try the line? My word for it, Lankford, I felt at that moment as I had felt on the Gowanus. Under the ban as I am here, the

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coward comes up in me; but when I faced the lobsters and their trulls, my flesh crept with the stir of rising bristles. I sent the first man who came at me sprawling. Then I turned, circled, assaulted again. With another tripped, I cut away for the eastern bluff. This twist broke the line. It was as easy as snapping your finger. You've done the same thing in play. Of course, all came after me. Then I made for the western shore. The doubling tangled them in a mass. By their shrieks, their oaths, their roaring imprecations, I knew I had cracked the whip-lash. I turned again and made straight for the fire. You smile, comrade, for your thoughts have run ahead of me. You're right. The ladies had gathered about the fire, and, naturally, the thing for me to do was to lose myself behind their skirts. As I dashed into the huddle I gave the old hoe-down cry of the dancers to the fiddler: 'Smoke Behind the Clouds!' How they screamed! How they scattered! But I did not stop to count the fallen. I had passed the line. I kept breathlessly on for better than a mile. One by one those who followed dropped away. Yet I was still nagged. I felt along my blade and turned in time to catch the first sword-stroke of my pursuer. After the first kiss the fellow belayed a mite, dropping back to study the hang of things. As he saluted, I could see that he was given to the graces. I could also see that he bore the markings of a captain of the light infantry.

"Meanwhile I took on a slower swing and a wide roll. You understand that I was skating backward,

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he forward. A trip, a tumble, or a clumsy stroke would have meant death for me; as for my antagonist, he was in constant danger of overrunning his mark.

"The swifter our progress the better for me; therefore, I gashed the ice resoundingly and sped like a man smitten to the liver with the chill of fear.

"Seeing this, the fellow came at me, point up, but I beat him off and dropped into a swaggering roll, though speeding like the wind.

"At last he raced at me, crying in sing-song, 'Coward, stop thief! coward, stop thief! I dare you to try the cut over!'

"In answer to him I swung heel over heel; he followed, buckle over buckle; and in this way we described a perfect circle upon the shining bosom of the river.

"Then, when we had returned to the point from which we had begun the manœuvre, I again swung backward, chaffing him hotly. He asked me my name, and I gave it to him. He told me his,—Sir Lounsbury Asquith,—cursed me for a saucy rebel, and dashed at me vengefully. Sparks flew. 'Twas a last kiss and a fiery one; but, by God's favor, I slung his jingling blade rods away and held him a prisoner on my point. Wasn't this as strange a thing as you ever heard of? There I was, retreating at race-horse speed, yet holding on my bit of Cromwellian scrap-iron a fellow who perforce came after,—in act a pursuer, yet in reality as tight a prisoner as ever was!

"However," continued Littlejohn, "I soon let the

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fellow go, taking his parole; and, being well out of the enemy's frying-pan, leaped at once into this fire, where I expect to be charred back to dust. With respect to my finding you in the pit, that was brought about in this way: At the first rapid I made for the river shore and pushed along the bank. It was tiresome work, and I bore off into a timbered ravine in search of some secure place where I might take a long breath. Midway the ravine I found an untenanted cabin, and in the cabin a heap of dry leaves. Such a bed for a man tired half to death! When I opened my eyes the sun was shining from the west. Near the cabin door, on the other side of the heap of leaves in which I had buried myself, lay a man who was groaning pitifully. I got him a drink of water. He told me he was dying; said he belonged to Fitzpatrick's Tories, and confessed that he was spying in camp when shot. He also said that three of his party had been caught and hung, and then he told me what they had done with you. I was sure it was you, for his description was clear. I knew that the army's baking was done in a general oven, and hoped that I might find you alive. He told me how to get into camp secretly. I stayed with him till he died, which was about an hour before sunset. You understand, of course, that I had determined to come to camp and deliver myself up openly and boldly at the first picket. But, upon learning the story of Fitzpatrick's man, I pushed on at once, with what result you know. It's no use to cry. It's no use to moan. I might have taken a smoother path; I might have put myself in a better light. At least I've done you

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a fair turn, and now I ask you to set me well up in Mary's eyes after I'm quit of it all. Will you?"

I affirmed as before, solemnly now and with passion.

"Thank you," said he; "I'm satisfied. I fear nothing at all this side God's judgment-seat."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE COURT-MARTIAL.

CLOSE upon nine o'clock Littlejohn and I were hurried into the office of the provost-marshal. That functionary addressed us in a rough, gruff voice, as one who speaks from his midribs up.

"At ten," said he, "both of you—you pitiful varlets—are to try whether or no you can fly into the good graces of the court-martial presided over by the Honorable Conway, major-general in the Army of the Continent; and that you'll need a pair of wings apiece to do your flying I can tell you here and now. Wingate," he added, turning to the sergeant who had seized us the night before, "take this Lankford out for an airing. Strike off his chains, and let him walk about, but be sure to have him back here in one hour. The court will meet in this room at ten o'clock. You, sir," he added, shaking his finger at Littlejohn, "will sit there by the fire till you're needed."

The sergeant relieved me of my irons, and I fol-

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lowed him out of doors. Four soldiers accompanied us. I was not long in understanding the provost-marshal's partiality for me. When we had reached a secluded spot down by the river, Wingate exploded a pistol at my ear.

"Gad," said he, "your pardon, comrade; the cursed thing went off by mistake!"

Of course I knew better than that. He had shot off the pistol with the idea that I would be so startled as to cry out and betray myself.

Now I was as dumb as an oyster. I had told them at head-quarters that my infirmity dated from the explosion of the "Hellcat," and such was the case. But I had not deemed it necessary to explain that the defect was the result of a rheum that afflicted me when bedridden with my wounds. A learned doctor had explained the matter thus: Whilst in the fever a tiny clot of blood had passed up from my heart into my head, and, lodging in my brain, had locked up my box of words. That was all there was to it. Otherwise, my body was sound and my senses were good. They were certainly good enough for me to know what Sergeant Wingate was about, and I wrote upon my tablet my opinion of him and his act. If he would go out upon the ice alone with me, I wrote, I would knock him down. Wingate flew up like fire. He said I wished to get out upon the river so as to run off. I was not dumb at all, he swore; I was playing the 'possum's trick. But he would make me squeak before he got through with me; yes, he would make me get down on my marrow-bones and beg him to take me back to the mercies

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of Conway's court,—“Conway's, mark ye!” he bawled. “Conway's, I say, and he dare do nothing but hang ye!”

He blinked at his men, and, being carried away with his own anger, went on: “Conway himself's in one plot against the General, and you're in another plot; and His Excellency has sent a ferret to nab a rat.”

The angry sergeant had let out a secret. I saw it all. His Excellency, then, was using us to play off a sarcasm upon Conway. The army would see the point; Congress would feel the sting of it. Here was a piece of grim politics. I sat upon a log and shut my eyes.

“Ah, ha!” exclaimed Wingate, once more my master, “you look a little paler than you did a minute ago. Come! Come along here. I think you need a bath.”

They stripped me naked, jabbed a hole in the ice with their bayonets, and doused me from head to foot. The shock from the icy water, they thought, would force me to speak. Then, seeing that they could not startle me into hallooing, they gave me back my clothing. When I had put on my shoes I found that they had placed a handful of shot in each. Then they made me run round and round in a circle, nagging me with bayonets till my blood fouled the snow.

At last Wingate said, “’Twill be ten by the time we get back to the guard-house. This fellow is as dumb as death, and I'm sorry we've done what we have.”

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From that moment he grew very kind. As we ascended the hill to the provost-marshal's he took me by the hand and excused himself, saying that he had at first thoroughly believed I was trying to trick everybody. He had always hated spies and tricksters, and I must forgive him for his cruelty. I had as good as stood my trial, he added, and need feel no fear as to the verdict. And so it proved, for the court made short work of my case, which was the first called. In announcing my acquittal General Conway indulged in a pleasantry. "You now know," said he, "how it feels to dance on a drum-head. As you have wound up your business in camp, the court rules that you leave it forthwith." Then, addressing Littlejohn, Conway said: "And you, sir, may now face the court and give an account of yourself."

Littlejohn arose. He was the tallest man in the room, and by all odds the most noble in looks and bearing. He talked freely and earnestly. He told the whole story of his adventures, suppressing only the portions relating to Mary Truax and Alicia Gaw. As he talked my hopes flew high, but fell again when he had ended his account of himself, for Conway laughed in derision, and other members of the court appeared to be amused.

I heard some one exclaim, "Flub-dub, flub-dub! 'Tis as mellifluous as catgut, but all fiddlededee."

In the spokesman I recognized the brigadier, and soon understood that he bore a message from headquarters. He walked over and placed a letter in Conway's hands. Conway moved his close-shaven lips

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as he read the letter. He thought its contents over for a moment, and then passed it along to the members of the court, saying, "This is a matter for secrecy."

When the court had likewise read the communication, Conway asked if any one wished to speak in behalf of the prisoner. He lifted his eyebrows in surprise as John Marshall,* of the Virginia line, made his way to the front. The young Virginian invited the attention of the court to the danger of condemning the wrong man. For his part, he was convinced of the truth of the story he had just heard, and he believed that the prisoner should be recommitted, in order that the mystery might be looked into with thoroughness and cleared up beyond peradventure.

Again my hopes arose. I looked up at the president of the court, and was straightway chilled. He was leaning back on his bench, with his head against a log. He was smiling at the rafters and his smile betokened incredulity. I saw one of his followers stagger to his feet. The man was in liquor, and breathed with difficulty, but he knew what he was about. He looked at Conway and Conway looked at him with a knowing, encouraging look.

"The story just heard by this court," began the man, "sounds to me like a fabrication. It is such as could have been put together by any quick-witted rogue upon the disclosure of the evidence against

* Afterwards Chief-Justice Marshall. He was then about nineteen, very tall and very swarthy, with piercing black eyes. He has been heard to say that the Littlejohn case and its outcome impressed him so profoundly as to leave an indelible lesson in his mind.

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him. It is merely his shield held up against the arrow that was about to pierce him. I have no doubt whatever of his guilt, and shall vote for his conviction as a spy."

Just then the Commissary of Musters, puffing and blowing from a long run over the snow, appeared at the door of the cabin. He produced his orderly-book, and, at Conway's command, read a batch of memoranda pertinent to the case, each item referring to Littlejohn, and each ending with the melancholy phrase, "dead or deserted."

As soon as the Commissary of Musters had finished his task, the brigadier arose and cried out, "Zounds! are we men of sense? It's a gum-game, I say! Why burn daylight over such a rogue? Tut, sirs, to a vote! I hold here in my hand evidence enough that the prisoner is the most dangerous spy ever turned loose upon this struggling land!"

"Let the paper be read," spoke up Marshall.

"'Tis a matter for secrecy," interposed Conway, with his politest bow; "the court will vote."

"We convict!"

"We convict!"

"We convict!"

And it so went till six voices had joined in the chorus of condemnation whereunder my friend was to be put to death.

Never have I seen a man's eyes flash as his did when he thus heard the verdict of the court; but he made not so much as a mumble, speaking solely by look and wrath of countenance.

Once more Conway opened his lips. As it was

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equally clear, he said, that the prisoner was guilty under both heads of his indictment, the court would graciously give him the choice of being hanged as a spy or of being shot as a deserter.

The prisoner replied that he was neither deserter nor spy, but that, if he must die, it was his option, if it please the court, to be shot.

"Then," said Conway, "the court decides that the prisoner be shot to death at sunset this day."

I looked at Littlejohn. He was pitifully jaw-fallen. As the guards jogged him out of the room he waved me a farewell.

For my part, no sooner was I out of limbo than I found myself among friends. First, Wingate came up, apologetic and eager to make amends. Not only did he give me back my money, but, at a hint, he ran to procure me a horse. Then Marshall led me to the rendezvous of a foraging party which was about to set off for the region between the bays. This party, he said, would pass near Cockfoot's, and it might be well for me to join it. When I had given him to understand that I wished to write out a new statement for General Washington, he agreed to help me. We soon came to the cabin of the foragers. It was famed in army annals as the best hut at Valley Forge, and each particular log of it I now distinctly remember. It was built of split saplings notched at each end. The rounded, rough parts were laid outwardly, the hewn sides being within. Daubs of red clay, as clean laid and smooth as plastering, closed the crevices and crannies of each wall, making all air-tight as well as snow-proof. It stood

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fourteen by sixteen feet, and was roofed with oak timber, riven with the frow, and laid like shingles, piece upon piece. The door, which was in the end facing upon the street of the camp, was of split-oak slabs, swung upon oaken hinges and held by a wooden latch. At the peak of the roof-pole was a wild swan stuffed with forest leaves and swaying like a weathercock at the veer of the wind.

Inside we found three men whom I knew,—Erb, the head-quarters intruder, whose passionate outburst had moved me so greatly; Updegraff, now in disgrace, and Yarrington, who had likewise been stripped of his chevrons. Our welcome being hearty, I set to work at once, writing out for General Washington everything that Littlejohn had told me. Marshall examined the sheets one by one,—changing a little here, amending the logic there,—and, when I had finished, he summed up for me in a plea for disapproval of the finding of the court.

Whilst he was thus engaged I wrote out a second statement, discreetly omitting all reference to Alicia Gaw. This I intended for the Quaker maid.

Meantime, Wingate had come up with my mount, and, near four o'clock, I rode to head-quarters. The sun was fast declining. With fearful eye I measured the bare hour my friend had yet to live. I made my way into the hall, but was obliged to wait at the office door. Messengers passed in and out, yet no one recognized me. I counted the ticks of the clock in the General's room, and watched the shadows lengthen on the snow without. Thus standing, I saw the door swing open and a woman step into the

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hall. She lit the passage with her grace and beauty. I shrank against the wall. Her skirts touched me as she passed. She looked eagerly into my face and asked with a sweetness incomparable, "The General's office? Is it here?"

I bowed.

"I thank thee," said she; "I will step in without ceremony."

When she had entered all other visitors came out. One whispered, "Who is she?" "Jove!" said another, "a perfect Quaker bluebell!" They passed on. I edged along the entry until I could see Washington at his desk. Spread out before him was a map weighted down by his sword. He pushed against the door, seeking to close it, but it swung back again and stood well ajar.

CHAPTER IX.

THE RIDE OF THE QUAKER MAID.

THAT the visitor was Mary Truax I knew before she had opened her lips. When she had given her name and apologized for the intrusion, she explained the object of her visit. She had long intended to beg a kindness in camp, but now she had been hastened in her purpose. On the last night but one, the British, having reason to suspect her of harboring an American, had burned her father's house at Sweetbrier.

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"My light-horsemen on the Gulph hills saw the blaze, madam," interrupted Washington; "I feared an outrage, and deeply regret your loss. The miscreants have put a fringe of black around the whole city!"

Then Miss Truax spoke of the main object of her errand. The loss of Sweetbrier was much, she said, but the distressful and contumelious loss of an honored name through false report was the greatest of losses. She therefore begged the General to agree to her father's release from custody. Her plea was fervid; but, at mention of the Quaker exiles, General Washington's face instantly hardened. He folded up the map, put his sword in the corner, and, when she had ceased to speak, faced her with a look of cold denial.

"Miss Truax," said he, "I am obliged to address you with friendly plainness. Your people have been friends to expediency and to the king rather than to the party of ours, and they have latterly sought to undermine our credit and destroy the value of that which buys food, clothing, and arms for this army. Madam, you rode through the camp on your way hither. Did you not observe the distress of our soldiers? That distress is in large part due to those who have pinched our coin and cheapened our Continental currency."

Under this rebuke Mary bowed low her head, knowing what he said to be true.

"Madam," continued the General, "your people exiled to Virginia have a sunny valley to winter in. If the army roundabout us were but there, I for one should be as happy as I am now distressed."

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"Then," said Mary, "thou wilt at least give me leave to journey thither?"

"Without doubt—most gladly," replied Washington.

He turned to his desk for the purpose of writing a passport, and was on the point of dipping his pen in ink, when there came a knock at the secret door.

"Come in," said the General; and when, hat in hand, a confidential officer had entered, the chief added, "Well, what is it?"

"The death-warrant, sir? The provost has bid me ask you if you have approved the verdict in the case of Littlejohn, the spy."

"In the case of whom?" cried Mary, rising from her chair, clinching and clutching at the silk about her throat, and staggering towards the intruder.

"Go out of the room," said the General, sharply; and, as the man precipitately obeyed, the Virginian turned to the girl and gently led her back to her chair. Then he lifted a window-sash to let in the air, and offered a glass of water.

Mary motioned the glass away, and sighed deeply as she said, "I shall be myself again in a little while. I thank thee for thy courtesy."

"You are overcome with thoughts of your father. Fear not, dear lady; all will come out well with respect to him and his companions. 'Tis a temporary matter."

"Thou mistakest," said Mary, striving hard to keep back further signs of her emotion; "I am grieved to the heart to hear that by some ill-hap my dear friend, Mr. Littlejohn, is in danger of his life."

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"Madam, you can have no feeling for such a man. He is a spy."

"He is no spy," said Mary; "and if he be so accused, the accusation is false and cruel, and may be disproved."

The General gazed upon her with the look of one in deepest study. As he thus bent his glances his fingers mechanically filiped the paper on his desk.

"And is that," cried Mary, shuddering, "is that his death-warrant?"

"It is a death-warrant, madam."

"And if it be such, why is it the death-warrant of a noble, honorable man,—one without guile, one who hath suffered much, one who is true to America, yea, as true to America as he is to himself and to the Lord above us all?"

Mary's face flushed as she spoke. She had said too much. A gleam of suspicion came into the General's eyes as he glanced away from her and looked out upon the snow. He was thinking to himself: Possibly this young woman is an impostor. It is my duty to be firm; I have the key to Littlejohn's character; she may know who he is, or she may be a victim of his deceptions.

With this latter thought the General turned towards Mary and said, "Madam, I have good and sufficient reasons for keeping my own counsel in this matter of the spy."

"Then Mr. Littlejohn has been condemned as a spy?"

"Yes; both as deserter and spy."

"But he is not a deserter," said Mary, eagerly;

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and she related, with a vehemence of phrase at which she herself seemed frightened, the whole story of his seizure and involuntary wanderings. "And why, and why," she concluded, "is this poor gentleman to be hanged?"

"He is not to be hanged, madam; he is to be shot."

"He is to be shot? And why is he to be shot? Why is he to die?"

"Madam, I cannot enter into a discussion of this matter. The sentence pronounced upon the prisoner was deliberately made by a court-martial which had indubitable and damning evidence of his guilt. He is to be shot at sunset to-day."

"And who constituted this court that judged away his life?"

"General Conway was at its head."

Thereupon a new thought flew into Mary's mind. The blood of indignation reddened her temples. She arose, and placed a fair white hand upon a corner of the desk. She looked Washington straight in the eyes, and said, with passion,—

"Thou hast been maltreated and spied upon by a brigadier of the line; and yet thou now turn'st over to him a person thought to be a spy to be tried by a man whom thou knowest to be worse than such. This may be a gentleman's irony, but is it just to my poor friend, the victim?"

"Madam, I am pained. I cannot admit that my ears have heard your latest words. You will pardon me if I request that this interview end."

"But," cried poor Mary, humbled, "wilt thou not agree to stay the execution of the sentence?"

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"For how long a time?"

"Until I can go to York and prove to the satisfaction of the Board of War that thou art mistaking young Littlejohn for a Tory kinsman of his."

"The delay would take off the keen edge of the lesson we wish to give to those who contemplate desertion. That evil increases hourly."

"But, surely, thou wilt unbend a little in humanity's name! A day's delay will do no harm."

"But you could not arrange the matter in a day."

"Give me leave to use thy signals and I will send thee the report of the Board of War before noon tomorrow, should the sun shine and God be good to me." Mary's voice was choked with tears.

The General walked up and down the room. I fancied I could read the run of his mind.

Gates is at the head of the Board of War, thought Washington. A reversal by Gates of Conway's sentence could not reflect upon the General of the army. Nor was there much likelihood of such reversal, he mused; this was a girl's whim and it would do slight harm to humor her. But even if she were in league with the plotters, she should not victimize him. He would give her a letter in cipher, and no one save his confidential agent in York, to whom she must deliver the letter, could cause to be sent the special signal that would save Littlejohn's life. Having thought out his line of action, the General told Mary just what he would agree to do. He would postpone the execution until noon on the following day. If before that hour a certain set of flashes which he had designated in cipher should reach camp from York

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he would again put off the execution until communication could be had by express.

Mary thanked the General, courtesied and stepped into the hall. At the outer door I pinched her arm so tight I fear I bruised the flesh. I handed her the message her lover had told me to write. She bent for a few moments over my lines and then, her tears flowing, said, "I see it all! Thou wert with him in peril. Thou art his friend. Thou and I must strive to save him. Wait thee here!"

She flitted back into the house, taking with her the statement I had prepared for General Washington, and speedily reappeared with a rescript of the cipher.

I helped her to the back of her horse and leaped upon my own. In a little while we were at the camp's edge speeding westward. At times the girl kept her face averted. I felt that she was crying. Then she would turn and speak of the roads we were to traverse. She hoped my horse would hold out. Hers, she said, was both fleet and strong. His name was "Topgallant." Littlejohn had broken him for her the year he joined the Blues. At this, I looked well at the horse; he was a magnificent beast,—his coat coal-black, his nostrils lined with red.

By sundown we had left the last outpost behind us and had cantered into a well-worn highway leading to the west. It was dark among the trees, but the overspreading vast of blue was still illumined at the evening's edge and the skim-ice that crinkled and crackled under hoof shone white before us. "Topgallant" ran with a spirit coleaping with that of his

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mistress. At first the clogging snow troubled him at the hoofs, but he soon caught a trick of beating off the clogs upon the harder stretches of roadway. Thus he ran mile after mile; and did he but slow a trifle in hollow or at bridge a high-spoken, quick "Speed, sir!" spurred him on to fresh endeavor.

As for me I used my whip, I cut with my heels, I pinched as with the devil's claws. A maggot of fury got into my blood. Crouched to the withers of my bay I felt like a demon; but the Quaker maid, upright and as tranquil as the soaring moon, sat seemingly at her ease as she flitted full tilt forward ever constant to her purpose. Did she meet a horseman in the road, 'twas a touch of the rein, a leap, a sweep, a skim, and she was away! Once a party of men threw themselves, with hullabaloo, across the road. She galloped over them and bent low in her saddle as their pistols sounded.

At the White Horse, "Topgallant" had but cleverly gained his second wind; at Whitford he was freely asweat and asmoke; now he was spotted with flecks of foam, and ran furiously in heat of blood. Never before had his mistress given him such a gait; but he kept his heels and held his pace, and accepted her caresses as he paused to drink in the Brandywine.

Thence to Lancaster was a long run. The stars that had shone above our heads when we left camp were now dipping at the rim of the hills. While the girl was parleying with the guards at the town's end a bell tolled twelve.

It went against the grain with the guardsmen to let us pass. The place was filled with prisoners, blue-

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coats, militiamen, and, as for us, they urged, we might be spies. But at last they let us in. I was now on "Topgallant's" crupper—my own horse had given under miles behind.

The Quaker maid drew rein at the tavern in the square, and, leaping off his rump, I led "Topgallant" into the court. Candles were alight in a room on the ground floor. When the tavern-keeper came out, Mary begged him to hire us, or sell us, a speedy, good horse. In a moment I was at the man's side, persuasively clinking half-joes in my palm and displaying the coin in the lantern's light.

He rubbed his chin.

"Step in," said he to me. "You'll find a party at cards in there, and, unless I'm much mistaken, one of them will need the wherewith to pay his score. He's been losing since sundown. He stabled a good nag when he put up,—maybe he'll sell it."

Dismounting, Mary threw her cloak over "Topgallant." She refused to enter, but offered me her purse, which, happily, I did not need. I was soon bargaining with the unlucky gamester. Something about him was familiar, yet I was sure I had never seen him before. He questioned me closely. Where was I going? Why the urgency? I was so eaten up with eagerness to gain my end that I threw off all caution; I wrote, with flying pen, the full tenor of my errand.

"As I understand it," said he, "the answer is to be signalled back in the morning."

All the men in the room had gathered round us. Their cards lay scattered upon the table.

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"And the fair Quakeress,—where is she?"

I motioned towards the court.

"Here's a new game!" cried the fellow. "The stake is high!"

I disliked his insolence, but looked up, smiling. As I did so I saw one of the men steal out of the room. The mystery, the delay, my inability to express myself in spoken words, the leap of my desire caused me the sorest distress. I laid coin on coin till my hand was emptied. Then, with a laugh, the officer pocketed my gold and led the way to the stables. How slow he was in fetching out my purchase! I was near dying with impatience. At last I rejoined Mary. Her hands were clasped.

"Why," said she, sighing; "here thou art. Awhile ago I saw a rider dash away and I feared it was thee!"

As we rode along towards the west she said: "Thou and I will now race for it over the long way to York. I will reach that place if I have to kill my horse—yea, kill another and another! Thou must ride with like urgency. Here is the duplicate of my message. We are now at the forks of the way. We must part. I will take this road to the right; thou the other. Shouldst I fail, thou mayst succeed; shouldst thou stumble, I, by God's grace, may come well to the Codorus!"

She gave a chirrup which, to "Topgallant," was half kiss, half spur-thrust, and vanished like a phantom.

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CHAPTER X.

OCTORARA.

FOR my part, I at once fell foul of my horse with lash and heel; but the beast moved grudgingly at best, and when we came to a spot where the road ran down among rocks and brambles, he began to cut a caper round and round, dancing to the tune of the "Cavalryman's Ghost." I thought of my knife, and gave him the point of it, jab upon jab. He bit at my leg and plunged forward. The next instant I was swept from the saddle and fell in a rolling, wild fall. I had been thrown by means of a grapevine stretched across the road. Where my horse went I never knew, but the oath of a ruffian, who sprang upon me and twisted my hands behind my back, just as he would have winged a stolen pullet, made it plain enough that I was in devil's hoc and clean done for. Realizing this, I lay still. I heard someone ask, in a familiar voice, "How is it, Sandy?" "Dead! As dead as Cæsar! Cracked his skull in the tumble."

Then I felt the speaker's fist fall like a sledgehammer between my eyes.

When I came to the sun was about three hours high. My face was so swollen I could hardly see. My surroundings were entirely strange. High rocks stood up on every side. I was like a cricket in the bottom of a pot. A stream frothed along at my

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feet. When I had laved my face in the water I began to understand what had happened to me. My captors had dragged me into the hills and, at the approach of day, had thrown me into a narrow, deep cleft among the rocks.

I felt in my pocket for the cipher letter; it was gone. Then it danced through my mind that the man who had laid hands on me the night before was Fitzpatrick, the British spy. I had felt his clutch at Head-quarters house, and I remembered the griping of his fingers, the scratch of his talons! Something else with respect to my misfortune I seemed to remember, but in a dim way only, till by and by I struck myself an angry blow! It had come to me in a flash. The voice of the man who had questioned Fitzpatrick? Yes, it was the same voice I had heard while in the pit; it was the voice of the man who had revealed the plots of Lee, the voice of "my dear Digsworthy." Digsworthy, then, was the name of one of the ruffians who had waylaid me. I now understood why the card-player of whom I had bought the horse in Lancaster had seemed so well known to me, yet had been so distant in my recollection. It was a matter of sound—of muffled sound; he was none other than the plotter to whom Digsworthy had made his disclosures.

"So," said I to myself, "I know three of them; I know Fitzpatrick, I know Digsworthy, and I also know the third conspirator, by sight, at least, if not by name."

At this thought I bestirred myself vengefully, and, clambering to the roadway from which I had been

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hurled, took track of my captors which lay plain in the snow, running east of south in the bed of an ancient Indian trail, among the swelling Octoraras. On and on I trudged, up hill and down, scanning all the region about until finally my eyes became fixed upon a flashing object some two miles away.

The flash came from the top of the highest hill anywhere in sight. I had no doubt it was one of Pruitt's signal-towers. This discovery gave me a sad turn. I will not attempt to tell of the dreadful palsy that smote me body and soul. For a time I could not stir a leg. I now felt that it was I, and no one else on earth, who would be blood-guilty for Littlejohn. Mary Truax had reached York,—that I felt in my soul. Heaven, indeed, had helped her, for was not the sun flooding the world with a light that would bear her signal on! Yes, in her love and by her prayers, she had beaten down time and clouds; and now I—an imp, a careless fool, a debtor for my life to the man whom she sought to save—I it was whose stupid incaution at the tavern had worked to trip her in the flush of her success! Of course I now knew all too well the meaning of the night's dash into the hills; I knew that the schemer Digs-worthy was the condemned man's rival in love; I knew that within the hour very devilish business was like to be done and I knew that Asa Lankford would forever after carry about him a secret heart-scar which would haunt him awake and burn red in his dreams.

Then a frenzy seized me. It still lacked of twelve. The message, perhaps, had not yet come. My legs

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were still under me. Possibly I could yet help to stay the death-shot. I stumbled as I ran, but I kept on, constantly leaping upward towards the tower. I drew so near that, if I could have cried out, I might have reached the ear of the signalman, but, at the very moment I seemed about to win my goal, I fell sprawling in a patch of wintergreen. Before I could rise I saw my ruffian captors loping along, under a screen of rock, towards the tower. They had not seen me, so intent were they upon the motions of the man in the outlook. They came so close that I feared lest they might hear me breathing. At the front ran Fitzpatrick, and, following, came the man who was next in my dread. He was half-winded and puffing hard. The charm of devilry was over the whole spread of his face. Black, persuasive, smiling eyes; black brows, lifted in a fine arch, as if mocking the whole world; nose with the aquiline ferocity, yet unsuggestive of beakiness; a satirical mouth; round, smooth cheeks, with as much pink in them as any girl might wish to carry; such was this arch-plotter as he passed along at the briars' edge, musket at trail and murder in his swing.

I rose on my hands and followed him with my eyes. As I did so I saw the signalman take up his mirror, breathe upon it, and cleanse its surface with a sweep of his sleeve. I saw him immediately ask a question of the outlook on the Martic hills ten miles to the west. Then he slanted his glass to catch the sunlight, in order that he might flash the message campward. The glass caught the rays, but never delivered them. A ball from the musket of the

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lurking fellow below struck the mirror, and its shattered fragments fell to earth with whirl and clink and shine.

To me, holding my breath in my bed of briars, this was the shot that killed John Littlejohn.

PART II

**STRANGE ADVENTURES AND DISCOV-
ERIES**

CHAPTER I.

QUAKER GRACE.

UPON witnessing the vile act at Octorara tower I was at first impelled to go in search of the Quaker maid, in order that she might be forewarned against the machinations of her lover's assassin. For would he not hasten to York and set up a siege against the poor girl, playing upon her affection for her exiled father,—wooing her subtly with a thousand lies?

Then it came into my head that the best thing for me to do was to go back to camp and lay the whole story before General Washington. He would at least write to Miss Truax, putting her upon her guard, and he might, indeed, take it upon himself to end the plot by hanging the plotter.

With this thought I made all speed down the Great Valley of Chester, and, on the evening of the second day, gave an account of myself to the colonel of the picket guard, near Warren tavern. This officer was pleased to laugh as he read my statement.

"The Digsworthy mentioned here," said he, "can be nobody under the sun but Digsworthy Snaith. Do you know Captain Snaith? No? Well, I should say not! He's away up, I tell you!"

The speaker lifted his hand high above his head, and cut a mark in the air.

My heart sank.

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"Young man," he continued, as he saw me blench, "if you hand this to General Washington, he'll court-martial you for maligning an honorable officer. Take care what you're about, sir! You can't pass this post at such an hour with such a message. I've half a mind to hang you to the Warren sign. Be off with you!"

In order to get away from him I hurried into the tavern. It was like a hive. The Warren that winter was called the "Blue-jackets' Nest." Officers elbowed each other in the eating-room, and in the place where drink was sold the jostling, the oaths, the fumes combined to make an animate hell in small. In the hubbub I heard Laffoon roaring out "Tom Nokes's jig."

I felt a tug at my sleeve, and, turning, found myself face to face with Yarrington. He looked at me shrewdly, made a sign for me to follow him, and quit the tavern. When we were out of ear-shot he said, "We start towards Cockfoot's to-night. The whole party is over there where you see yon clump of cedars. We spied you on the Conestoga road, and held back for you because we knew we couldn't pick up so good a guide as you'll be. Come it at the quickstep, Lankford!"

Without waiting for my yea or nay, he strode briskly off. I followed him at a trot. It was now growing dark and snow was falling. Flakes as big as the buttons on an Anspacher's coat were coming down in swarms as we joined the foragers.

The whole party started southward at once and walked through the forest hour after hour. Scarce

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a word was spoken. Yarrington, explaining the silence, whispered in my ear, "The British dragoons were on this side the Schuylkill last night. Some say Simcoe led them, some say Tarleton; for my part, I'd swear both were riding. They raided the Quaker's, burnt all the cloth there, and scattered the needle-girls like a covey of quail!"

While I was mentally drawing for myself a picture of the scene at Fairlamb's, we came upon a sleigh in which sat a man and a boy.

Yarrington at once besought the man to tell us where we could find food enough to keep us from starving.

"Whig or Tory?" asked the stranger, flashing a light upon us.

"To be plain," said Yarrington, "we have no stomach for politics, just at this particular minute. If you will give us a forward jog to'rds some place or other where we can get a bite, you will do as good a thing as man ever did a brother."

The stranger eyed us and still flashed his light around and around among us.

"Come!" said Yarrington.

"See here," said the stranger; "thou and thy followers are a parcel of rebels. But, if thou wilt agree never to let it be known that I fed thee, I'll take thee home and give thee as good as we've got in the house."

This set us all astir at once. The duller of us brightened up. The very prospect of the feast warmed the cockles of our hearts and put us again in love with life.

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"One thing more," said the Quaker; "the night the king's soldiers were on their way to Paoli, a fierce, unmannerly person drew from me a promise that no rebel should, with my consent, ever enter my door."

"But we will go in at a window," spoke up Yarrington.

"Ah, my friend, that hits to a T the very thought I've had in mind. You must all go in at the end window. Then I'll be able to beat the British devil round the stump and keep my conscience whole."

Whilst we were laughing and shaking hands with each other, at the prospect of breaking our fast, the Quaker was whispering a message in the ears of the boy, who soon started in a run down the ravine.

The snow was still falling, but the air was mild; and we were so keyed up in joy that we put out our tongues and caught the flakes upon them and relished them as if they had been so many spicy tid-bits to sharpen our appetites for the feast.

"Pile into the sledge here," said the Quaker. "We'll soon reach the house, and hunger will then be appeased. Mother will set a good table for you, and you needn't be surprised to see a couple of good fat roast pigs set before you."

"Roast pig!" exclaimed my comrades, with a shout that echoed among the rocks.

"Yes," he replied; "two roast pigs. We cooked them this very day to send to camp for the General's table."

A whoop ran down the hollow.

"Sh-sh-sh!" whispered the Quaker; "you'll frighten my good wife so that she may take you to

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be redcoats, and run off, roast pigs, roast turkey, sliced ham, and all."

"Ah!" exclaimed my comrades in tones so hushed and muffled that even the Quaker burst forth in loud laughter. "Yes," said he, "all prepared for the great soldier's table. But we have more pigs, more turkeys, and more hams, and we likewise have plenty of fire to cook them with. Still, my friends, remember to go in at the window,—yonder window from which the light is streaming,—for in that room our table stands, and I doubt not mother hath there already spread forth thy feast."

The Quaker drew up by the window and tapped upon the panes. The sash was raised by a gentle Quakeress, and with as great a show of decorum as we could make under the circumstances we one by one climbed into the room.

The sight that met our eyes was most pleasing.

A long table, covered with snowy cloth, ran from one end of the apartment to the other. Plates were set for twenty. Dishes of bread and sliced meats stood here and there, and in the very centre of the board was a great pile of red apples. At the head of the table was a well-browned turkey, still steaming; and fortifying the feast were two roast pigs, each with a pod of red pepper resting upon the tip of its nose.

At first we were too delighted to speak; but as we ranged ourselves around the table and drew up to the board my comrades all found tongue and gave proof of their joy.

One voice caught my ear, and, in amazement, I

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looked 'round and round. My wits nearly left me when my eyes fell upon the man who sat at my elbow. It was Littlejohn,—unmistakably Littlejohn! He was muffled up in a ragged great-coat and his face was smeared with streaks of soot. He laughed as he saw my drop-jaw stare; but, instantly becoming grave, whispered, "You've seen Mary! I could swear it. Oh, my God, Lankford! How did she speak of me?"

I reassured him with a grasp of the hand.

"So? Heaven be blest! At the first chance you must write out for me all she said to you. Queer things have happened to me since you and I parted. Some secret friend intervened to save me. They gave me but ten paces and shot at me with six muskets, but I came off scot-free. I think the wadding was torn from a dove's nest! This unknown friend also slipped me a line to join the foragers; I did so, and——"

A rap on the table caused us both to turn our eyes to its head, where sat the Quaker, examining his long carver with a critical eye.

"This knife," said the Quaker, "is greater than the sword of Washington!" We clapped our hands and stamped our feet.

Then the master of ceremonies, looking up and down the board, heaved a deep sigh and bent his head as one in prayer.

"'Tis Quaker grace," whispered Littlejohn. "'Tis Quaker grace, 'tis Quaker grace," went up and down the length of the table, and each of us bent his head.

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Suddenly we heard a savage exclamation from the doorway. It was sudden and savage as I say, and it startled us like a thunderclap.

"Surrender, you d—d rebels!"

There was instant confusion. Some of us sprang up, but not a man of us dared try to escape; for the doorway was filled with dragoons, the hall was filled with dragoons, the windows were choked with dragoons, and a hundred pistols were pointing at our heads.

"Your highnesses," quoth Tarleton, stepping towards the table, "have mistaken your castle. Nevertheless, I salaam before your excellencies, and am happy to inform you that on the banks of the river Delaware, a few miles hence, dwelleth a noble knight, yclept Sir William Howe, who hath a well-dungeoned fastness wherein you will find the service of hospitality."

"But," spoke up Simcoe, of the Rangers, likewise advancing, pistol in hand, "as this feast was prepared for us, and as we are devilish hungry, and as the turkey is getting cold——"

"Why," interrupted Tarleton, still mocking us, "we shall be obliged if your worships will hie to the corner there, whilst our wayworn, saddle-chafed selves take a bite or two."

Imagine it! Just at the moment we were about to set to with free hand, right heartily, we were driven away from the table and our places taken by our captors. The officers of the troop that had raided Quaker Hall filed in and feasted for an hour before our eyes, and when they had finished, the

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troopers themselves came in and, with many sallies of wit at our expense, picked the last bone and licked every platter clean.

Thus did Fitzpatrick's ally, the notorious John James, of Catkin Hollow, upon whose head Congress that very winter set the price of ten thousand dollars trick us into captivity.

CHAPTER II.

"THE CAPTAIN."

HAVING mocked us to their hearts' content the British horsemen tied our hands behind us and then strung us all on a single rope, wrapping the cord round and round each man's waist. Then they marched for the British lines and the city, keeping us on a trot most of the way. In the early morning the stars came out, and at dawn we were halted at the middle ferry.

We crossed the Schuylkill just as the sun began to melt the snow ; but it was past nine before they got us eastward into the thick part of the town. Then it was that we began to feel ashamed of ourselves. We were rebels,—for that we did not care a copper ; but we were ragged and dirty and served as foils for our saucy smart captors, who, by smirk or gesture, invited upon us the jeers of the bystanders. These were apprentices, milk boys, camp dodgers, servants of officers, Tory citizens of high

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degree,—everybody, in fact, among the five-and-twenty thousand people of the prostrate capital whose custom it was to go abroad at so early an hour.

At head-quarters we cooled our heels in the snow till nigh upon noon; then we were packed off to the State House, where Independence was declared, and put into the uppermost room of that noble hall, the guardsman who let us in poking us up the last flight of stairs with a bayonet-point as sharp as a thorn.

At two in the afternoon we were summoned to the quarters of the Superintendent-General. While we stood in the entry of the great Tory's office, a chair drew up at the curb, and from it alighted a lady, closely hooded and well wrapped in a long, rose-tinted satin cloak. All beholders watched for her face, which, when madam passed up the steps, was seen to be that of Lady Alicia Gaw.

We stood backed against the wall, but she swept by with not so much as a glance.

"'Tis she of the butterfly," whispered Updegraff to Littlejohn, who nodded and looked significantly at me.

But the door of Galloway's office had closed upon Lady Alicia, and we were left to speculate as wisely as our wits would allow us upon the meaning of her visit. Presently the door swung upon its hinges, and one of Galloway's underlings came out. He was bustling and lawyer-like, and was clad in a snuff-colored suit. He had stolen out to enjoy his Scotch, for he produced his snuff-pouch, and sniffed unctu-

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ously at a pinch of its contents. He turned and looked frowningly upon us.

"Why do you keep these prisoners here, cumbering the hall?" said he, sharply, to the guard. "Take them out of the way till they're wanted. Bestow them there in the lower area!" said he; whereupon the guard marched us into a side hall and down a flight of steps into a brick-paved room below.

We had remained thus for close upon a quarter of an hour, when we heard the door of the office open. All were attentive, for we were momentarily expecting a summons to attend the Tory militant enthroned in his lair. We listened, and became aware, by the rustling of skirts, the tap of a feminine toe playing the devil's tattoo upon the floor of the hall, and the subdued and pleading tones of a man's voice, that Lady Alicia had been followed from the audience-chamber by the auditor himself.

"But the game is too small for me, sir," said Alicia, with scorn. "Why should I thus waste my energies?"

"My dear lady," protested Galloway, speaking with vehemence, "you do not fully appreciate my situation,—our situation,—the state of the king's affairs in this province. This, of all others, is the moment for action; and I submit that the action should sharply follow the lines of the plan I urge. This is the time to undermine and dissipate the rebel army. It is already crippled. It is dwindling day by day, hour by hour. Deserters come to me morning, noon, and night. There are upward of three thousand men in the rebel army

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who are incapacitated,—naked, starving, learning to abhor the cause they have espoused."

"And you wish me to help you in your campaign of starvation!" said Alicia, with the irony of one who combats obstinately.

"I wish you to smite hard for the king," continued Galloway; "and this is the time to smite. Help me now, and I am your servant forever. I appeal to you, madam, to sink your pride a little, to smother your distaste for this vital operation. Why should you not? The plan jumps with the purpose of the king, and he will reward you. Has he not said so? Did he not tell you with his own tongue that to scotch the snake you must put your stick—your fork of gold—as near the fountain of venom as you could thrust it?"

"And is that not my purpose? Am I not working to that end? Do I not see my way to it as clearly as I see the flash in your eye, sir; as clearly as I read you at this instant? Ah! sir, it is you who are obtuse; not I, not I!"

Galloway's tone changed. His voice sank almost to a whisper.

"Good lady, listen. I have said that highness of purpose is our bane. I called it 'pride' a moment ago. Forgive me! I was provoked. I suffer constantly from the thought that the king's cause is dying because of the inertia of his servants. Shall I name names? No, I cannot; I cannot. It would ill-become me. It would bring on instant collision. It would ruin everything. But this inertia on the part of the king's men here must be as apparent to you

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as it is to me; and you know as well as I that the king himself is on the nettle of expectancy. Has he not France on his flank? What do I see when I open my eyes in the morning? Inertia! Do the drums sound? What do the fifes say? What is it at reveille and at taps? What am I conscious of when I close my eyes at night? Inertia! What do I dream of in the middle of the night? A great army inert, and in the dead of comfort and dissipation. Alas, my lady! you say I am obtuse. Yet my chagrin is acute,—my grief poignant. It is their pride that stays them, too. Do not I daily, hourly, suffer contumely from these shallow lords and lordlings, who strut about the streets of this vanquished city? And shall not I speak against the pride that tethers us here in inactivity, when with one stroke of vigor we could stain the snows of Valley Forge with the thin blood of the ragamuffins who there inhabit? Come now, my dear lady, most loyal of women, help me break that which is almost broken. Strike at Mr. Washington's commissary. Is he not weakest in that?"

"Tut, sir; tut, sir," interrupted Alicia. "I would destroy his army on the field of battle. I would break rebellion with its bayonets all a-bristle; and you ask me to enter upon a potato-and-beef campaign, to plot and scheme and bribe, to keep the last crust of bread out of the mouths of naked starvelings. Tut, sir; I am a woman of spirit, I thank you. I, sir, will lay at the king's feet generals and men of the Congress, and, if all goes well, a whole army. Yet you talk to me of potatoes and beef and pork,

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and Heaven knows what not! Shall I spread a net for a commissary when I may hook such a man as——?”

Alicia's voice fell to a whisper, and the name she spoke was inaudible.

“What do you think of that?” said she. “You work your plan to starve, and I will work my plan to entrap,—horse, foot, and dragoons, commander and commanded, rags and ribbons, swords and muskets.”

Galloway laughed.

“Your ladyship,” said he, in the dryest of voices, “did you know that the captain was with me?”

“The captain!” said she, likewise with change of tone, being now complaisant, mild, eager; “I thought the captain was still in England!”

“No,” said Galloway. “At this moment, if all be well, he is on the Chesapeake, and he has with him twenty thousand pounds sterling,—good gold, of the king's giving.”

“Is it for me to handle?” asked the Lady Alicia, completely subdued.

“It is for you to handle. Will you place a moiety of it for me?”

“I will.”

“Will you help me in my plan to divert all food, clothing, ammunition, from the rebel army?”

“I will.”

“My dear lady, I am happy! We shall win in spite of the lethargy of the Howes.”

“But when did the captain reach America?”

“The barkentine in which he made the voyage

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came up this day, and is now in midstream, off Queen street wharf."

"But the captain, you say, is in the Chesapeake?"

"Yes; and with a rendezvous for you at the Bald Friar. He quit the ship in the lower bay, crossed to the Chesapeake, and is probably at this moment bound for the Susquehanna in a picarooning craft which flies the rebel colors. Now, madam, please to mark! Our plan is this: The captain will meet you at the Bald Friar, and then you two will operate together. You may buy up as many of the Congress as you please, and put poison into the hearts of as many of the army officers as you can, but the captain has vowed that he will engage every commissary in the State, tickle the palm of every engrosser, and burn every vessel that may seek to ascend the Chesapeake with supplies."

Lady Alicia's boot again began to play the devil's tattoo on the floor of the hall above us. Eloquence itself doubtless would have been dumb in the face of the torrent of her thoughts had she but expressed them, yet she said, simply, "I am attentive, sir; go on, if you please."

They now passed into the street, but we could still hear them and could also see them through the basement window near which we stood.

"As for Continental money," continued Galloway, "you will find bushels of it at the Friar; for, in an old quarry there, Fitzpatrick has set up a press and is printing notes by the hundred."

"Does not the legend upon these notes of Congress run, 'Tis Death to Counterfeit'?"

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"Yes, that is the printed threat; but do not we, too, threaten in print? The more of the currency we put out the more the king's true gold is worth. The Quakers understand that. Your twenty thousand pounds would at this moment buy millions of the trash. And now, madam, I pray you, do not grow cold in this matter," pleaded Galloway, as he led Alicia towards her chair and made his parting bow.

"Lightning never freezes," said the Lady Alicia. "Adieu, sir!"

It was Littlejohn who now cried out as he shoved his way to the window.

"'Lightning,' says she! A thousand thunders say I! By God, Lankford, if you've been dumb ever since I met you I've been blind ever since you ran afoul of me!"

He cracked a window-pane with his fist, and, showing his face, called out, "Alicia Gaw! Alicia Gaw!"

"What, you!" she exclaimed, fluttering close up to the window; "you here? You! Then you weren't hanged, after all! The fairies attend you, Mr. Ortolan."

"Your ladyship knows very well that my name is not Ortolan."

"No! Then what is it?"

"I'm the captain's nephew."

"The captain's?"

"Yes, the same of whom your ladyship spoke while plotting with Galloway."

"You overheard us, then?"

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"Yes, and I now know you to be co-knave with the worst scoundrel who ever drew the breath of life!"

"Have a care, sir! 'Twill be up and down with you if you let your tongue run in this way." She motioned with her arms, cutting a gallows-scene in the air. Meantime, her eyes were volleying at him like a teased cat's. Then she uttered a few phrases in a foreign tongue vehemently and passionately. It was like the curse of a gipsy. The next minute she calmed down.

"I will tell you something you ought to know," said she. "I saw your father in London. He told me about you. He begged me to beat America over to find you. I promised him I would. But my promise lay lukewarm till I had seen you at the Quaker's."

As she mentioned Fairlamb's, something in the quick cut of her eye told me she had egged the dragoons on to make the raid.

"Then," she continued, "I began to take a real interest in you. I wished to save you and see you safely out of this country. I said to myself, 'I will turn all upside-down for him!'"

"As God helps me," cried Littlejohn, "I'll have nothing more to do with you! I'll have nothing more to do with you, nor with my uncle. I despise him and you from the bottom of my heart! This I burned to tell you, and this is why I called you back just now."

"Ah! well," said she, "I've really felt for you; but I'll now give you over. However, I'm a woman,

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and, being a woman, I will ask you whether you know who helped you to get off in the nick of time up in the rebel camp a very, very little while ago?"

"Why, it was my good angel, I think," answered Littlejohn.

"It was I!"

"You?"

"No one else. Certainly not Miss Truax, whose liking for another has escaped none but you. Fie, fie, Mr. Littlejohn! You know neither your friends nor your enemies!"

Littlejohn grew red in an instant and then deathly white.

The Lady Alicia laughed.

"You taunt me, woman!" said he, finally, a fearful wrath rising up and possessing him; "begone with you! You lie!"

But the Lady Alicia was already in her chair, hurrying away.

Littlejohn's jaws worked as if he were about to cry out after her. I clapped my hand over his mouth.

"The she-devil! The Jezebel!" he hissed in my ear; "she lies! She shall not put poison in my heart!"

But, even as he spoke, I could see that the man was envenomed.

I thought of the Octorara tower and of Snaith. What should I do? Should I tell this poor fellow of the treacheries that beset his love? But what good would it do him,—close kept as he was in a hedge of bayonets? No; time must work out what time had set afoot.

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cock," and straightway jingled down a handful of bright coins upon the floor of the pit.

"What!" exclaimed an officer at his side; "is there no coin against our chick? Fie! Fie! Where are the backers of the little blue champion?"

"That gentleman," whispered Littlejohn to me, "is the same officer who met me in the skylark on Schuylkill ice a night or so ago. I made prisoner of him then and put him upon his parole; but now I am a prisoner and he is strutting around down there like our poor little abused chick of Whiggery. If I but had a purse, I would lay it on the blue cock, and whoop for the cause."

"We hear Sir Lounsbury Asquith's call," spoke up Lord Howe, "but we are here to bet on a British bird. Beaufoy, of the ship 'Raleigh,' hath in his bag a cock that can thrash the army gaffer. Withdraw the blue chick and then lay your gold against us!"

The Royal navy thundered forth, "Hear! hear! hear!" as in a broadside.

"What would I not give," quoth Littlejohn, "for a little gold to lay in favor of the Whig cock!"

As this jumped with my own desire, I unbuckled from about my waist my belt of half-joes and handed it to my friend. This belt, a gift from the miller of Cockfoot's, had been taken from me at the provost guard's, in the Valley Forge camp, but had been restored to me, with all my other possessions, upon my release. Though I had used some of the money, the belt was still heavy with Spanish coin.

No sooner had Littlejohn realized the full truth of this new and surprising matter than he thrust his

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hand through the opening and dropped the money into the pit below. Then he spoke down through the crack, in a stout voice, jubilantly,—

“A belt of gold on the blue-tailed cock!”

You may imagine the uproar,—I, to save my life, could not begin to give an idea of it. We thought the State House would tumble! Talk of the “Battle of the Kegs!” ’Twas as nothing when compared with the furor occasioned by this bold, defiant wager.

But after awhile, when the British officers below had come to an understanding of the presence of a parcel of half-starved Valley Forge prisoners in the loft above them, they laughed as loudly as they but a moment before had roared.

“All right above there!” spoke up Sir Lounsbury Asquith; “the fight will be upon the wager. ’Twas boldly laid, but you will oblige us by keeping as quiet as possible. Do not make such a thundering noise. You will shake too much dust down if you stamp and will give the cocks a hawk’s scare if you scream. So please be mum!”

“As mum as death,” replied Littlejohn. “Bring out the Blue Hen’s cock!”

With that the two birds were placed bill to bill in the pit and the fight began.

But just then we heard Yarrington say, in an excited whisper, “Come, men! Come! This is our chance. Updegraff has broken out upon the roof, and has let down the rope at the west end of the hall, over the clock’s face. Come! follow me!”

We obeyed with alacrity and in silence. Man by man we followed him out through the hole in the

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belfry wall to the icy roof, and one by one we crawled after him to the spot where the rope hung down. It was a perilous undertaking; but here was a chance for liberty!

CHAPTER IV.

A BOLD STROKE.

Down old Liberty's rope we slid, one by one, as quick as cats; nor did we stop to take breath or mark time after we had struck the hard-frozen ground. Whether, as we came pell-mell to earth, with thud and whack, it was the shattering of icicles or the "thump, thump, thump," of our boots that aroused the guardsmen we never knew; but we soon heard them running towards us with crack of firelock and loud calls of alarm.

"Away!" cried Littlejohn. "Every man to his heels! The devil take the hindmost!"

We cut across Independence Square and threw ourselves, helter-skelter and heels over head, into the garden of a mansion to the east, whence we ran as hard as we could go in the direction of the river Delaware. Then, all hue and cry having ceased, we passed out into a street and slouched along with the swagger of riff-raffs and sutlers' boys.

"So far so good!" said Updegraff. "A wicked scratch, lads! Heigh, Ortolan! Have you a scoopful of breath left?"

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"I've enough left," said Littlejohn, "to ask, 'What next?'"

At the head of Pewter Platter alley we came upon a sentinel. He was stealing a smoke, and we knew him by the smell of his pipe before he saw us; but, even as we were about to turn dodgers, he hailed us and thrust his bayonet across our front.

How little things do blend with big! The sentry might have put a stick in our wheel of flight then and there; but he, having the guilt of his pipe about him, fell into a bluff and roared out, "Aboard ship! aboard ship, you bubos, you wheals, you blisters! Whither have ye been philandering! Shuffle along! Go shoot at kegs!"

"An' that we will, me Billy Chapman O!" spoke up our McGlinchey; "but whin ye're after a lift across the salt thin come aboard av our transport!"

"And do ye belong to the barkentine that's just in to-day?" asked the sentry, boldly returning his pipe to his lips.

"An' what barkenteen do yez mane?" asked McGlinchey.

"The 'Bounding Bess.'"

"Roight ye be," said McGlinchey.

"Then," said the sentinel, "you're off your course; you're steering down the wrong street. Bend around on Swanson, you lubbers! Your boat's at Queen Street wharf."

We hurried along. "Now," whispered Littlejohn, who was in the lead, "we have our cue. We are sailors all, and belong on board the barkentine

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'Bounding Bess.' That was a quick-witted fib of yours, McGlinchey!"

"May His Holiness and His Satanic Majesty conspire to buckle me lips with hooks and eyes if iver I tell anither," chuckled the Irishman; "but that lie leapt up as natural as breathin'!"

We pushed noiselessly along, single file. Everything was dark around us; but Littlejohn knew the way, and each man followed his leader. When we were well down Swanson Street we heard some one out upon a wharf thrashing his sides with his arms to keep himself warm. He was mumbling in a gruff voice, and we knew, first, from his brogue, that he was a son of Erin, and, second, from the indistinctness of his words, that he was talking to himself. He was, in fact, cursing his fate as a poor impressed sailor-man obliged to stay by the yawl, awaiting the coming of pleasure-seeking superiors in order to put off for the ship.

Updegraff walked briskly towards him, saying as he approached, "Ahoy there, mate! Can yez tell us, and obleege, whereaway lays the 'Bounding Bess'?"

"An' the 'Bounding Bess' is it?" replied the sailor; "shure roight here be her pinnace, and roight there in the strame ye can see her spars ashine in spite av the darkness and cursedness av this could Ameriky!"

"Arrah there, Pat," said McGlinchey, "put this bit av a corn-cob in your mouth and come along with us."

"No," said Littlejohn; "don't gag the fellow. He will be our friend. What is your name, mate?"

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"Hinch, sor,—Thomas Hinch; an' who in the name av the pupil av the Pope's eye be all of yez,—be ye pirates?"

"No," said Littlejohn, "we are all right; and you may be one of us if you'll do as we say. How many men are there on board the 'Bounding Bess'?"

"Six," said the fellow; "all the ithers are ashore."

Then it broke in upon such of us as had hung back that Littlejohn, Updegraff, and Yarrington had in mind a bold project. They proposed to board the "Bounding Bess," to slip her cable, and drive her down stream. The tide was running at a swift ebb; the wind was fair and strong.

"Scull us straight to the barkentine," said Littlejohn, when we had all tumbled into the boat.

"And moind ye, Hinch," exclaimed McGlinchey, "it's into the water wid ye an' yer kedge about yer neck if yez don't play fair!"

"Yis," said the fellow.

"And it's big reward and good fellowship," said Littlejohn, "if we come out all right."

"Yis, sor," replied Hinch, as he propelled us straight for the richly-laden transport.

The fleet of British warships, numbering upward of three hundred, lay at anchor in midstream. They were as well huddled as ducks in a cove, each ship having at her bows an iron-pronged triangle of oak sheathing to ward off floating hummocks of ice.

As the pinnacle approached the "Bounding Bess" the watch hailed us, and Hinch replied. Then we mounted the rope ladder that was let down for us, and in a jiffy had possessed ourselves of the drowsy

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and unsuspecting sailors, as well as of the "Bounding Bess" herself.

It has ever seemed a sort of marvel to me that we got the barkentine out from the midst of the fleet; but we did get her out, and that, too, with not so much as a challenge or a shot. She fell like a ripe apple into our uplifted hands.

Now, as every man of us was something of a sailor, we were not long in putting the craft in trim. Nor was there any need of whistling for a breeze; in fact, the wind did the whistling that night, piping a shriller tune than we wished to hear after we had run past the British batteries and the Yager post at Gloucester Point, and had sailed out upon the great reach of the river between the forts, where, in the preceding autumn, red-hot cannon-balls had danced about in air like fireflies, and where, with a detonation heard for thirty miles around, the great British man-of-war "Augusta" had been blown towards the moon.

The sky that night was as the crystal face of a great clock that told the time; Orion was like a giant hand that came up in the east when we spread our sails, and that sank in the west as we furled them towards the peep of the morning.

As the "Bounding Bess" heeled to the northwest wind, and the new-risen, clipped moon whitened her canvas, the roar of alarm-guns came booming down from the fleet, and many a feverish glance did we cast astern with the expectation and the fear of seeing a cloud of sails rise up from the murk of the waters.

But our surprise was not to come from that quarter. On a sudden, we were startled by a racket in

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the barkentine's cabin. Updegraff opened the slide and looked down. Then he roared like a bull.

"Jupiter Olympus!" he shouted; "here are our French allies,—Bonfils, Briquet, Beaujeau, Capefigue, and all the others. In Heaven's name, messieurs, why are you here? We had thought you cruising with the 'Yellow Jacket' down in West Indian seas?"

The Frenchmen came up the companion-way, rubbing their eyes, blinking and gazing about them like men bewildered. But by and by, when they had come to an understanding of the turn of fortune, they cracked their heels together in Gallic joy. Their presence on board the barkentine was soon explained. The "Yellow Jacket" had been run down three hundred miles at sea by a British sloop of war, and they had been placed as prisoners on board the "Bounding Bess" for safe conveyance to Lord Howe's fleet.

"And," cried Bonfils, "do you know what a prize you have taken? The 'Bounding Bess' is a belated Christmas transport, and she is loaded down with good things sent to the British officers and soldiers by their friends in England. Her hold is filled with cloth and rich rations and Christmas boxes. We brought over the wives of ninety officers, and we landed in the lower bay a secret agent of the king."

When we had run down below Marcus Hook, those in command held a conference. The question was as to what we should do with our prize. Hearing this talked of, and learning that a British frigate closely guarded the approach to General Smallwood's post at Wilmington, it came into my head that we could not seek a safer snug harbor than the deep,

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narrow, forest-bordered stream which made up from the Delaware to the very mills of Cockfoot Forks, whence I had set out on my pilgrimage to camp. Elated with this thought, I drew a plan of the stream and placed it before Littlejohn, Updegraff, Bonfils, and others of my fellow-fugitives, and all agreed that the swamp below Cockfoot's was the proper hiding-place for our prize. We could reach the creek by daylight; moreover, the trees would tower far above our topmast heads, and no frigate could follow us up the dark and sinuous stream.

And so well did our men handle the "Bounding Bess" that at sunrise we found ourselves within two miles of my old home at the Forks.

CHAPTER V.

TRED AVON.

THE very first thing that morning Littlejohn came to me and began to talk about his uncle and Alicia Gaw. His face was haggard, his eyes were blood-shot.

"I've been wrestling with myself," said he; "I went below as soon as we got the ship safe in the creek and tried to sleep, but the devil had me tight. It was worse than waiting for death up there in camp. I've suffered the torments! I've been tempted to desert you, Lankford. I feel that I ought to hurry to York. She's a hawk, Lankford, and don't

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you see she'll put her claws in my poor girl's heart! And the other! What pits will he not dig for my hapless love?"

He sank down upon the anchor chains and bowed his head between his hands. Jealousy and fear were tearing him.

Bonfils approached.

"What's this?" said he; "nothing wrong, I hope!"

"No," answered Littlejohn, "nothing whatever; on the contrary, monsieur, I spy light ahead! You saw with your own eyes the state of things in camp——"

"The army is starving," interrupted the Frenchman; "nothing can save it."

"We can save it," said Littlejohn, "and I'll tell you how. I thought it all out last night."

"A plan!" said Bonfils, with a shrug.

"Yes, a plan; I've got it pat, and, sure's God's in heaven, we'll execute it!"

"Good!" cried Bonfils; "in other words, we'll strip this ship for the poor devils."

"More! We'll take them twice as much—thrice as much."

"Come, you talk well! Let's put our heads together."

Meantime, the others had crowded round. There was a parley; and, when it had ended, half of us set out on the road for Cockfoot's, leaving Yarrington in charge of the prize.

But when we had gone about half-way to the Forks we were brought to a stand by the sight of a party of men drawn up on the far side of a stream

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which here crossed the road. We numbered less than a dozen, all unarmed ; they more than a hundred, all mounted and bearing guns, pistols, pikes, axes, and scythes. My comrades stood aghast. As for me, I laughed for the first time since my experience in the pit. At the head of the countrymen I recognized my father, the white-coated miller of Cockfoot's. On his shoulder was my own little squirrel-ing gun, and I could have sworn to the size of the shot with which it was loaded. I could have sworn, too, that the fierce-looking soldiers at his back were only the fox-hunters of Appoquinimink. They had met for a chase, had got word of the approach of the barkentine and were now dutifully reconnoitring,—as respectful of us at heart as they were of the name of God. I ran forward. The miller sprang down from his horse and leaped the stream.

"By the Eternal, Asa ;" he cried, "we took you for the British, or at least a black pirate !"

We were now all met in a sedgy spot, with saplings thick around. It was like Liberty's forum. The sun warmed us. A redbird whistled from the thicket. Some of the wilder of the men began to fire their pieces in celebration of the taking of the ship. The hounds, tied up at Cockfoot's, heard the noise and bayed in echo. Finally, a council was arranged.

Littlejohn was the chief speaker. I, who had beheld his show of weakness but an hour before, now marvelled at his access of manhood. In a quick outburst, each word striking fire, he made it clear that all of us must rise up in succor of the army. The miller of Cockfoot's, he said, had agreed to fur-

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nish wagons enough to transport the captured stores to camp. What should the others do? Why, he could tell them; each of the hundred hunters must ride up and down a hundred roads, setting all astir between the bays. Monsieur Bonfils, a chevalier, would help them arouse the Kents. As for him—the speaker—he would take it upon himself to scour Dorset, Talbot, and Queen Anne's for hoof and grain; and, if he did not come up from Choptank side with a hundred teams, he wished he might die! Cockfoot's, he said, was to be the general rendezvous, whence all would pass northward together.

The company cheered. Some took up the scheme as a winter frolic, blowing their horns and hallooing; some engaged themselves solemnly, shaking hands and looking into each other's eyes.

After that I galloped with Littlejohn for two nights and two days. Not once were our whips out of our hands. If we were covered with mud, we knew that by and by we must swim a river; if we were drenched to the skin, we knew the sun would dry us.

When we got out of our saddles in front of Littlejohn's home at two in the morning of the third day I could barely stagger up to the porch.

Littlejohn sounded the knocker. There was no response. Again and again did he rap. The place seemed tenantless.

Leaving me in the porch, Littlejohn went away to stable the horses.

It was a starry night, with just moon enough to silver the frost and put a ghostly touch upon the great white mansion. Owls hooted from a grove of

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ancient oaks, beyond which I could see the wash of a river upon its strip of white and pebbly sand. I knew that the stream was the Tred Avon, for, in riding up, Littlejohn had told me much concerning his home and his people. The founder of the house was a sea captain, who had made his fortune freight-ing sugar, rum, and emigrants. Once he succored a slave-ship off Hatteras and landed her cargo on the banks of the Wye and the Tred Avon, affluents of the Chesapeake; and, so fair was the sight of the Tred Avon's shore, that he swore he would come live there if ever he should quit seafaring. Years after, the memory of the green shore, with its riches of game and shell-fish, came to him, and he anchored finally at the spot now under my eyes. This old sea captain, Anthony, had two sons. The elder of these, James, was he who had died in the tower; the younger, John Littlejohn, of A., was the Tory uncle of my comrade.

While I was listening to the owl hoots,—my flesh creeping at the uncanny sounds and the spectral aspect of things,—I was startled by strange cries from the rear of the house. As I sprang up, Littlejohn came bounding round the corner, crying, "Hang it, Lankford, the devil's to pay! I had thought my uncle gone, but he's here! If you want to see with your own eyes what manner of man he is, follow me!"

We ran to a window looking in upon the kitchen. The room was lighted from a huge fireplace. Upward of a score of negroes were assembled and others were pushing in. They were half clad and in

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their bare feet. Captain Littlejohn, with a long-lashed ox-whip in his hand, stood in the centre of the room. He was hectoring a slave whom he called Cudge.

"The devil take you!" he cried; "I'll teach you to rouse the house at midnight!"

In vain did the negro plead: he had seen his young master, he said; he had heard a tapping of the knocker, and, looking out, had seen "young moss."

"You scrub!" roared the captain. "Jack's dead! Jack's dead and gone to the devil!"

With that Captain Littlejohn cut into the fire with his whip, scattering the coals out across the floor. Then he lashed the legs of the poor creatures till they trod upon the brands. The lash was hot, the brands were burning, the screams of the negroes filled the house.

When his fury had spent itself he strode back into the mansion, and we soon saw candle-light in his room above stairs. When the slaves had dispersed, my comrade entered the kitchen. Cudge and his wife Jince were cowering in the chimney corner, and the skin of their faces was as gray as the ashes at their feet.

"Cudge," said the young master, "I've been away a long time, but you need not think I've been on a visit to the devil."

Cudge advanced and took his master's hand. Then he burst forth with a welcome impossible for me to phrase. "Lord-a-Mitey, Lord-a-Mitey," was his refrain, and in this Jince joined with the high-piping, shrill note of her Guinea kind.

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"Now, Cudge," said Littlejohn, "I'm dog-weary, and must go sleep till noon. But I want you to run at once and arouse my people. Tell them to slaughter all the cattle, hogs, and sheep, and to bring out every wagon, cart, ox, and horse on the plantation. I want to be ready to start north by sundown. I'm going to haul everything we have in the way of beef, pork, mutton, lard, corn, wheat, and potatoes to the American camp at Valley Forge. Send out the boats for oysters, fish, geese, ducks, and birds. You shall be lord of this manor till the clock strikes twelve."

Cudge was dumfounded. When his master had walked away he turned to Jince and put a finger on his forehead.

"Young Moss ain't dead, dat's sho'," said the negro; "but he done gone crazy!"

As for Littlejohn, he entered the hall, and, finding a candle, started towards the stairs; I followed. As he was about to put his foot upon the first step he saw his uncle approach from the upper hall. He, too, held a candlestick, and, as he began his descent, he lifted the light above his head and peered below. He was now fully dressed. He was small in stature, with pale, bony face and a maniacal, cold look in his eyes. His hair was close-cropped and his face was clean and shiny like the bluish-white of a razor-blade. His hands were as small and white as any lady's, and his feet seemed to belong to a woman rather than a man.

As his elder continued to advance downward, with one hand on the rail and the other holding his

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candle, young Littlejohn stepped aside and took stand by the newel-post at the foot of the balustrade. He saw that his uncle was followed by two strapping negroes, each of whom bore a heavy burden.

Down the stairs stepped the elder, his eyes fixed upon him who stood below. When six steps from the bottom he paused and said:

"I do not believe in spirits or in devils. You are Jack!"

"*In corpore sano*, uncle; I am John Littlejohn, of J. I wish you a good morning!"

The old Tory snuffed his candle with a snap of his fingers; and, as the flame grew upon the wick, so grew the glare in his eyes.

"It were better for you, sir," said he, "if you were dead and in the maw of some shark, as I had thought you and wished you."

"But, sir," replied the other, "I am alive and sound of body, as I hope I am sound of heart, and I wish you a safe voyage across the sea, whither I advise you to betake yourself."

"You advise, hey!" said the old man. "You advise! and, pray, sir, since when have you gained your growth?" His eyes now burned like a thousand candles.

"Since my father's death I have felt that I was of a man's height," replied the nephew; "and I now tell you I am master here."

The uncle's answer was quick and violent. He threw his candlestick into the other's face, cutting a gash upon his cheek.

"You, master here! You! You! Why, you

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shall hang; and that you shall! You! Why, you are a damned rebel,—a black-hearted, damned rebel, and the king will hang you!"

As he spoke he strode down into the hall. He was in extreme passion, and acted as if beside himself. He frothed and raved and stamped up and down, and looked wildly around in search of some missile or weapon with which to assault his kinsman. Finally, his eyes lighted upon an antlered deer's head which was pinned against the wall. This he tore from its fastenings; but, before he could hurl it, young Littlejohn stepped towards him and felled him at a single blow of the fist.

"See!" said he to the two body-servants; "your master lies there upon the floor. Take him away! Take him to the ship, and tell him, when his senses come back, to sail away from this country. Tell him to clear out and clear off, and never again to show his face in this part of the world. Tell him I am now his enemy, and that this is the last of him on Tred Avon side. Bear him off! Bear him off at once, or I will tie your bags about your necks and drown you as I would drown a cat. Off! Away! Begone with you!"

Up to this time I had stood by, inactive; but I now began to gesticulate, beseeching my friend to follow the negroes and snatch away from them the bags, which, I was sure, contained the king's gold.

"God help me for a dolt!" cried Littlejohn, when he had at last seized upon my meaning. "I've been so intent on the villain I clean forgot his worst villainy. After them!"

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We burst out through the door and ran as hard as we could towards the river; but the only sign of the fugitives we could see was the fresh print of a yawl's bow in the sand.

From the way Littlejohn raged when he found he was balked I knew how bitter things were thereafter to be between him and his uncle. He'd never forgive himself, he swore, for his stupidity. Nor was there the slightest excuse for me; I should have knocked the negroes down and taken away their traps.

Then suddenly he changed his tone.

"Hark ye, Lankford!" said he; "we must call in a new ally. There's a Miss Leatherberry who lives across the bay. We must beseech her to join us. I will give you a letter to her, and you must sail at once for her plantation at Mobjack, on the Virginia shore. Juba! Juba!" he called, as we approached the house.

A powerful negro, with silver rings in his ears, came swinging up.

"Make ready to sail to Mobjack, Juba! You must be on the bay by sunrise. Wake up with you! Off!"

Then, turning to me, Littlejohn said, "Yes, you must go,—you must go! I'll trust nobody but you. This is a vital matter now, and I'd rather die than fail in it!"

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CHAPTER VI.

MOBJACK.

IT lacked an hour of sunrise when Juba sailed with me out of the Tred Avon; the evening stars were ashine before we had come within sight of Mobjack bluff. As we sped along Juba opened for me the secret book of the Littlejohns. Juba was a red mulatto with a broad face and thick gray hair, which curled like that of a Newfoundland dog. He told me that his mother had been kidnapped from Africa by his father,—the old dead-and-gone, blue-water sailor, Captain Anthony. As for the business in hand, he was by no means new to it. The year Braddock came up the Chesapeake he had passed to and fro between Tred Avon and Mobjack once a week, month in and month out. That was the year his special master, John Littlejohn, of A, fresh from the London Inns of Court, had made love to Miss Polly Leatherberry. Yes, said Juba, many a token had he fetched and carried 'twixt shore and shore. At that time the captain was as yellow-hearted as a boy, except that he was stiff-necked and sullen when in drink. Miss Polly was a belle, very gay and bold, and fond of bringing silver knee-buckles to the carpet. But Juba never doubted her love for his master. Their first quarrel was their last. One night, in payment of a forfeit, Miss Polly permitted an Annapolis gallant to kiss a black patch she wore on her cheek.

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The offender's lips were scarce dry of it when the lover challenged him. Here Juba sadly shook his head. Miss Polly mocked his master, he went on; for what did she do to tease him but send each duellist a black patch, cut with the cross-bones, bidding each wear the target in the centre of his forehead! He who had brought on the quarrel declined to tag himself with the lady's favor. But John Littlejohn wore his patch; killed his man; and, casting off his sweetheart, took upon himself a cynicism as incurable as leprosy.

Such, in brief, was Juba's tale, told with rolling eyes, unctuously, as we cut along through the tossing waters.

It must have been short of nine o'clock when I handled the knocker on the door of Mobjack House,—the greatest house I had ever seen,—but I was told that Miss Leatherberry had gone to her room for the night. Then, immediately, came a more gracious message; Miss Leatherberry would see me.

I passed up the stairs. The room into which I was ushered was wainscoted with mahogany; the ceiling was of mahogany; the huge curtained four-poster was a fortress of mahogany,—all as well became Mahogany Hall, built, as Juba had told me, by Miss Leatherberry's father, the very spring a ship laden with mahogany had been wrecked in Mobjack roads.

I looked about me curiously. There were two negresses knitting by the fire, but neither of them stirred. I seated myself to await the lady's coming. I thought of the black patch and trembled inwardly. Then, again, I looked towards the bed. A curtain

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had been drawn. On the pillow I saw a cap of whitest lace, framing a marvellous countenance,—a sallow, sharp face, with a nose like a beak, and an upward curving chin. But for the lightning in the eyes, flashing steely looks towards me, I should have thought their owner dead.

"I'm an ancient dame," said Miss Leatherberry, rising upon her elbow, "and you've still got the pip on your nose, I see; so there'll be no impropriety in it, young sir, if you come close up and tell me what you want."

I advanced and handed her Littlejohn's letter.

"A candle, 'Lize!" said she.

She sat up, broke the seal, and read the letter aloud in a cracked voice. It ran,—

"HONORED AND DEAR MADAM,—Having lately come from the camp of the confederated colonies at the Valley Forge, in Pennsylvania, I wish to bear witness to you of the very sorrowful state of our army, of whom three thousand are without clothes for their skin, and, alas! almost without skin for their bones.

"Madam, well remembering rich words of yours that burned in upon my ear on the occasion of our students' Liberty ball, at Annapolis, on 'Peggy Stewart' night, I now find warrant in the confidence then reposed to beg of you for succor on behalf of our starving army.

"Should you send a fleet to Head of Elk as speedily upon receipt of this as the boats may be equipped, your relief train may be joined with ours; for, my

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dear madam, our Whigs on this shore are astir and are about to despatch a parcel of wagons for that point.

"But, honorable lady, I blush to confess that my uncle, John Littlejohn, of A, is not only a Tory knave, but that he is thought to be picarooning in the upper Chesapeake; so, whilst with pride I seek your aid, it is with shame that I give you warning of the perils that may beset you.

"Madam, I myself am in disgrace at camp, yet 'twas because I was mistaken for another of my name.

"Honorable and dear lady, ten thousand pounds of pork would not come amiss in camp.

"Your servant, ever to be commanded,

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"How like his uncle he writes!" exclaimed Miss Leatherberry. "What more have you to tell me?"

I handed her a statement of the whole Littlejohn affair, praising the nephew and sparing not the uncle as a bribe-giver, whose gold might yet be seized.

Miss Leatherberry was visibly stirred. Her color rose. She flung herself out of bed and drew on a huge surtout, minding me not a particle more than if I had been a little chore-doing Cuff of her great plantation. Then she strode to a window, reached out and gave many violent tugs at a rope which set a bell clanging in a cupola high above the hall. To a chief servant who came running in she said, "Burn the flares!" to another, "Let off the cannon!"

Such was Captain Polly, of the famed Black Patch, —now mistress of the vast region of Mobjack and

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Piankatank, with its multitudes of slaves and its unnumbered acres. A great patriot was Miss Leatherberry,—a woman of high thoughts and bold heart was she; and whatsoever she did was done with spirit.

Never before had such a night been known on Mobjack bluff. Cattle were slaughtered and dressed by the light of the flare; the "home flock" of sheep, intended only for the table of the mistress of Mahogany Hall, was put to the knife, a ram and six ewes being kept for breed; the many smoke-houses of the plantation were robbed of their stores; the granaries were emptied; even the innermost closets were unlocked and relieved of their jams, their wines, their cordials. "It is worse than if the British had ravaged the place," groaned the housekeeper, as, having at daybreak buried the silver in the garden, she threw her apron over her head and wept at the despoliation.

Miss Leatherberry spent the morning in loading her bay-boats and picking out her crews. Hundreds of people, mostly black, and many of them her own slaves, lined the bluff; but only the picked men dared come near her as she walked up and down the great wharf talking with the clerk into whose hands she was about to intrust the administration of her estate.

Captain Polly's craft was known to herself as the "James and Thomas," in honor of her two sea-going uncles; to the negroes the sloop was simply the "Jim-Tom." In the bow of the "Jim-Tom" was placed a swivel-gun, and in the waist a blacksmith's

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forge was set, bellows and all, for the purpose of heating cannon-balls red hot. This done, and all stores being well under hatches, lines were cast off, canvas spread, and the Mobjack flotilla sailed away amid the boisterous farewells of the hundreds of slaves on shore.

The winds of heaven favored Captain Polly in her northward cruise. The whole fleet of six sail passed out of Mobjack haven about the middle of the afternoon, and at dusk we were running up the bay before a brisk southwesterly breeze which put a night-cap on every wave and sang all to sleep save those on watch.

But before the Mobjack fleet reached its destination a strange thing befell us. After a smart run up the bay we had entered the Elk on the second night only to find our boats becalmed. So, at the turn of the tide, we had anchored close in upon Rogue's harbor. Towards midnight Juba aroused Miss Leatherberry, roaring his summons down the companion-way as if the world were about to split.

The sight that Captain Polly saw when she came out of her cabin startled her. Drifting straight down upon her little fleet was a huge fire-ship which lit the sky, illumined the ebbing waters of the river, and cast a great glare upon the rocks and forest trees bordering the roadstead wherein her richly-laden bay-boats lay.

Captain Polly watched the fire-ship in silence for a moment. Then she said to Juba :

"There's a steersman on board that hulk!"

"Yessum," said Juba, "dat's so, mum; she's

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a-steerin' plumb down for us, an' de ebb's a-flowin' fas', es yo' kin see by dem wile ducks, mum."

Captain Polly looked in the direction indicated by the old negro, and saw a great flock of ducks, numbering many more than a thousand, huddled upon the bosom of the river, their heads all turned upstream as if fascinated by the fire-ship, yet all passing downward with the swift-moving tide.

"The thing's being steered against us," said Captain Polly; "and there's not air enough going to blow a fluff of swan's-down off our decks!"

"Dar's no doubten' dat, missus; what air we gwine to do to head 'er off?"

"Ten of you jump into the shad-boat," said she; "take your boat-hooks, your grapples, your hawsers, your short chains. Come, come!"

Captain Polly was first to board her row-boat, when, with loud, hoarse "heave-ho! heave-ho!" her negroes had hauled the small craft alongside and deposited therein the articles necessary for defence.

Meantime, not merely the thousand ducks, but all living creatures roundabout, were up in alarm. The thunder of their flight was like the noise of a host of angels rousant. Startled by the sounds of preparation on board the vessels, which till then had floated as silently as themselves, the multitude of wild fowl mounted high into the air, darting in and out among the spars, through the rigging, down upon the decks, confused and frantic.

When those in charge of the various transports saw the manning of Captain Polly's boat, and heard the "James and Thomas" weighing anchor, they also

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hove short, and prepared to go down with the tide. Each sloop, likewise, sent off a small boat; and that, too, with promptitude, and in every case with a spirit indicative of rivalry among the dusky captains of the fleet.

The scene was lighted as by a thousand bonfires. Huge clouds of smoke were rolling up from the thick of the flames, the roar whereof deepened minute by minute. Sheets of flame, upleaping from the pitch-stored hold of the fire-ship, overtopped her mastheads. 'Twas a pretty sight for such a mother-duck as Captain Polly, with all her ducklings to shield; 'twas a pretty sight, this hawk with red wings that came swooping out of Rogue's harbor in the dead vast and middle of the night.

But our Amazon of the Mobjack was undismayed. With six hefty negro watermen at her oars, Captain Polly approached the menacing fire-ship, passed swiftly to windward, and darted close in under the stern, which, standing high out of the water, was as yet untouched by the flames.

"See! See!" cried Captain Polly; "there's a bear on board! Can that creature be steering the hulk?"

"No, missus," replied Juba; "dar's a two-legged critter right down heah by de ruddah!"

And sure enough, lurking under the stern of the fire-ship was a man, who, safely bestowed in a small boat known as a sharpie, was steering the hulk down upon the Mobjack fleet.

"Give him a dip!" shouted Captain Polly.

Juba seized a boat-hook, quickly fixed its iron tooth in the rail of the sharpie, and with a savage

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jerk capsized it. But the man at the rudder was nimble as well as bold. He caught hold of a rope and swung himself up out of harm's way. Juba followed him as a hawk follows a hare; but the negro bore with him a coil of stout rope, and, upon reaching the stern of the hulk, he cleated one end of it and cast the other to Captain Polly's boat. Then, drawing a dirk, he faced both man and bear, and said, quietly, as he waved his hand towards the flames, "Keep ober dar by de fiah! Keep ober dar, an' lay low! I's got my eye on yo' boff!"

As soon as her boat had grappled with the hulk, Captain Polly placed Tubal, her body-servant, at the tiller, and cried, "Give way!" her purpose being to swing the stern of the fire-ship around so that the craft might float towards midstream. Her six oarsmen, striking in unison, put their blades into the water. The rope whipped the wave and grew taut; but, as it seemed, the fire-boat did not budge to the tugging. Again and again the negroes gave their weight to the oars, but the water roundabout, beaten into a foam, was sucked in under the fiery monster which still refused to move out of its course of destruction.

At this juncture, the other boats of the Mobjack fleet came gliding up. There were five of them; each manned by six oarsmen, with a seventh negro at the tiller. Had Captain Polly shouted, "Jump into the river, take the rope in your teeth and swim!" every slave of them would have done as she commanded; but they did not need to be told what to

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do. The whites of their eyes were shining, and their teeth gleamed as they gave gruff ejaculations. They swung into place like Prussians in a drill, and each boat became a link in the long chain of oarsmen who sought to wear the hulk, stern first, so that the current of the Elk might take her broadside on and whirl her into the Chesapeake.

But, as Captain Polly was quick to see, there was one weak link in the chain. This was the third boat which had come out without grapnels and without rope. In the stern of the boat was posted a negro named Cæsar Leatherberry, the surliest black on the two plantations of Mobjack and Piankatank, and the slave in whom Captain Polly had the least confidence. Having neither grapnel nor chain, nor strong hawser, Cæsar had linked his boat to the craft next astern by means of a stout boat-hook. He had flung his enormous body back downward, and now, with his face upturned to the stars, and his feet braced against the timbers in front of him was clinging to his pole with a grip of desperation. Four sets of oarsmen were heaving with tremendous strokes upon him. Four-and-twenty men were tugging as if to tear him asunder.

It was Captain Polly, as I say, who first understood and appreciated this. It was the critical spot. It was the risk of the moment. Upon the pluck and grip of Cæsar hung the fate of all.

She stood up, now ankle deep in water,—for the tremendous strain upon the timbers of her boat had caused it to spring aleak,—and said,—

“Hold fast, Cæsar, and you’re a free man!”

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Cæsar heard and groaned like an Atlas with the world upon his shoulders.

The bones of his arms cracked, his muscles were torn, his eyes bulged, but he set his teeth into the pole, and clung to it till his fang-like finger-nails gripped themselves into the wood each like the beak of an angry turtle.

Seeing this, Captain Polly sang out, "Set to! Set to!"

Suddenly Tubal began to sing. He had passed the tiller into the hands of another, and now handled the stroke-oar. He sang in slow measure, with the true melody of the negro watermen of the Chesapeake,—

"Ole Samson dragged de temple down,
Heave-ho! Heave-ho!
Ole Samson wear de strong man's crown,
Heave-ho! Heave-ho!"

And then, with quick, harsh, sharp, wild exclamations, cried at the top of his voice:

"Smite de water!"

"Grease yo' oah locks!"

"Wet yo' oahs!"

"Dip um deep!"

"Bend yo' muscle!"

"Heave-ho! a-yo! a-yo!"

At each exclamation the six-and-thirty oarsmen struck the water in perfect unison and with amazing swiftness.

Then, as they took breath for the turn of a second, Captain Polly called out, "Set to! Set to!"

Again the stroke-marker sang,—

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"Ole Samson tore de lion's jaw,
Heave-ho! Heave-ho!
Ole Samson had de stronges' paw,
Heave-ho! Heave-ho!"

"Cut yo' caper!"

"Churn de brine!"

"Bend yo' kneelers!"

"Spit yo' feelers!"

"Claw de water!"

"Scratch de bottom!"

"Rassel harder!"

"Snap de hawser!"

"Heave-ho! A-yo! A-yo!"

By this time the Mobjack slaves were wrought up to the heat of powerful action.

The blades bent; the timbers creaked; the wild flames sprang up in such a way as to seem to touch the sky and put out the stars.

Captain Polly shouted, "The hulk swings to yel! Now spin her to midstream! Cæsar Leatherberry, you are a free man! Hold for this turn and your Lize of Piankatank shall be a free woman! What, ye lazy jail-crows, break away!"

The last words were almost a scream; and again the "heave-ho!" cries sounded over the river, and again were the waters blanketed in the foam of the oars.

The burning hulk, now responsive not merely to the tug of the chain of boats, but to the power of the ebb, reeled as upon a pivot constantly swinging eastward until at last she was so far removed as to be incapable of inflicting injury upon the vessels whose destruction had been intended.

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CHAPTER VII.

SPESUTIE FIGHT.

GREAT was the rejoicing throughout the fleet. Crew whooped to crew. Miss Leatherberry, for her part, was in a quandary. Juba had left the bear on board the fire-ship, to roast or swim as it might see fit; but he had brought off the mysterious man, who proved to be none other than Pfaff Laffoon. When I had vouched for Laffoon as a true Continental, he told Miss Leatherberry a strange story. He had left Valley Forge to keep from starving, and, for several days, had kept life in his body by trapping pigeons on Bull Mountain, and shooting wild fowl on the Susquehanna flats. He had been paid with a full purse of guineas to pilot the hulk down upon our fleet, but had supposed us to be Tories. The man who gave him the guineas had sworn that we were enemies of America.

"What sort of man was he?" asked Captain Polly; "did his eyes cut and jab when they looked at you?"

"They were like the points of bagonets," replied Laffoon.

"Do you know where he is at this minute?"

"I think he's just beyant yon hump of hills on the Susquehanna side."

"Then," said Captain Polly, "we'll up anchor and

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go hunt him. You say you're a bombardier; will you handle my swivel for me if we catch him?"

"That I will, madam!" roared Laffoon, "if it's only to pay him back for his trick on me?"

Thus it happened that at three in the morning the "James and Thomas" was off the headland which is thrust down like a giant's thumb in the northern end of the Sea of Maryland. By four, the sloop had rid her keel of the waters of the Elk, and was now being borne along by the flood, which had just begun to enter that uppermost basin of the Chesapeake into which the Susquehanna pours the waters of a thousand mountain slopes.

Far, far astern, the fire-ship burned like a red star on the bosom of the bay, and in the heavens above her sailed a clipped moon, bound down the sky in old Saturn's wake.

A westerly wind was rising. The pink of day-break was in the east; wild fowl were honking overhead, and there was a clatter as of wings innumerable upon the shallows and in the coves. Geese, brant, red-heads arose from under the "Jim-Tom's" prow and cracked the air, as in a continuous whirlwind, but the rays of the morning sun were beating through the mist on Maudlin's Mountain, when at last Captain Polly saw, gliding out from its shadow, the craft she was sighing to come up with and dying to cannonade. The Tory's xebec was under full sail, close hauled, and was laying a course for Spesutie Island by the distant western shore.

Captain Polly put the "Jim-Tom's" nose in the wind and went about. The sloop swung upon her

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keel, and, with a pretty spit of foam at the bows, quit the shadow of the mountain, and gave the full of her canvas to the sunburst of the morning.

Just about this time (as one of the crew has told me) Captain Littlejohn stepped upon his xebec's deck. He was clad in storm surtout and lop-rimmed foul-weather slouch, and his nose soon grew blue as he shuffled timorously to and fro, 'twixt rail and rail, seeking all the time to settle the status of the pursuing sloop. It was the king's gold that made a coward of the captain. At last he propped his back against the cabin on the lee side, and called for his breakfast. This was of fried eels, biscuit, and tea. The captain was a man of many prejudices and few likings; and, as he foully hated an unbroiled Whig, so he dearly loved a fried eel.

And, whilst he ate his fried eel, he eyed his enemy. Smoke from the galley fire blew into his eyes, and he made oath that he wished it damned eternally. A swish of water washed along from the scuppers, splashed upon his boots, and he spat at the sea in anger. A glare of reflected sunlight from the slow-heaving, majestic waves blinded him for a second's space, and he raved against the garish light of the morning. The captain was a man of passion. 'Twas said of him that when in a tantrum he would fly at his anchor and seek to set his teeth in the flukes.

His breakfast done, Captain Littlejohn called for his spy-glass and focussed it upon the "James and Thomas." He paused to survey the swivel gun. Then his sight rested upon Miss Leatherberry. At first he was in perplexity with respect to her. Then

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the blue veins at his temples swelled big and his lips grew purple.

"Black Patch! Black Patch!" he muttered; "and what does the she-devil want with me?"

At the same instant, Captain Polly, on board the "James and Thomas," cried out to Laffoon,—

"Bring her to with a shot!"

Laffoon sighted his piece and let his hammer fall. A ball of fire sped across the xebec's bows.

Upon the delivery of this bold shot the mistress of the sloop-of-war went below and took from her private chest a silver box, which, in size, in shape, and in its specklings of time, was so much like a guinea's egg that one might have been mistaken for the other. Miss Leatherberry touched a spring in the silver egg and an end opened upon ready hinge.

As Milly of Mobjack and Lize of Piankatank watched their mistress, they rolled their eyes, and cast looks that meant more than any word their lips could utter. It was as if Milly had said to Lize, "Laws-a-messy! De moon's gwine to take a look at herself in de bottom ob de well;" and it was as if Lize had said to Milly, "De fur done gwine to fly!"

For when Miss Leatherberry had opened the silver egg she placed it to her nose and took a smart, long sniff of snuff. Only upon occasions of tremendous moment did Captain Polly resort to her Scotch,—not for six years had she taken a sniff,—and her waiting-women needed not the sound of hurrying feet and gruff ejaculations and flapping canvas above deck to apprise them of the eventful nature of the grand matter of the hour. Milly was a gentle creature,

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with a pleasing face and wavy hair, and her garments were finer than those of her mistress. Her limbs felt faint, and she trembled as she stood silently by her mistress's chair; but Lize was of a different kind and style. She was black and bold,—as bold as she was black,—and when she saw Captain Polly take her third sniff, she cried out,—

“Wherebber you go, missus, I’s e a-gwine to; so lemme hab a little ob dat in my own mouf!”

Captain Polly poured a thimbleful of snuff into the palm of Lize’s hand, and the lusty creature bestowed it at a scoop. Then she put on a coat belonging to her man, Cæsar, and followed Captain Polly to the “Jim-Tom’s” deck.

By this time the sloop and the xebec were passing westward on a fresh tack; and a few moments later the two craft were within hailing distance, though speech was difficult from the “Jim-Tom” because of her position to leeward.

Nevertheless, Captain Polly cried out, speaking up the wind, “Sail ho! Do you hear me, sir?”

“Ay, ay,” said the Tory; “but who are you that you shoot hot pot-metal at a peaceful ship?”

“I am Polly Leatherberry; and I hope to chastise the man who did his meanest to burn my boats.”

“Mistress Leatherberry,” replied the captain, bowing; “I once had the honor of your acquaintance, and I am happy to renew it.”

“But why did you try to burn my boats?”

“I am your ally, madam, I am your ally; and shall be only too glad to help you run down the rascal who tried to harm you.”

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"But you are the rascal!"

"Not I."

"'Tis a thumping big lie! You are!"

"Mistress Black Patch, I could blow your sloop to flinders."

"Try it!"

"My howitzers are too gallant to bark at a lady. Nor am I disposed to sink my decency and my good name."

"You've already lost both, sir!"

"'Tis true, 'tis true," quoth Laffoon; "even if his eyeballs were of gold, and he should pluck them out to pay with he could not buy back his lost good name."

"You have tried to burn my boats," shouted Captain Polly; "you are a Tory knave and a pirate. Your end cannot but be vile!"

"His end," quoth Laffoon, as he primed his gun, "will be everlasting torrefaction in hell."

"Let go!" said the Lady of Mobjack.

Again the swivel spoke. The wind of the cannon-ball blew off the captain's hat, and the heat therefrom scorched his hair.

Then followed as saucy and sharp a fight as ever was seen in the waters of the Chesapeake,—a hot fight with much smoke and many curses. The people of Havre de Grace ran down to the riverside to behold it. The hunters on the heights betwixt the Elk and the Susquehanna rested their guns in the hollow of their arms and peered through the ever-green branches to spy across the river upon the combatants.

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The vessels were now speeding under full sail, side by side, and at close quarters. The picarooners of the xebec, having brought three big guns into play, began to pelt the "Jim-Tom" in the bows, where Pfaff, with his swivel, was thundering away like a man possessed. The gun was so hot that whenever a bit of spray blew over the bows and struck the metal there was an angry splutter of steam; but the old bombardier, his hands blistered, and his eyebrows singed to the skin with powder, banged and banged, and banged, ever aiming at that part of the xebec in which the Tory chief was to be seen.

As for Captain Polly, she stood near Laffoon and kept watch upon her enemy. Did Captain Littlejohn fly to the bows to urge his men there posted to make better use of their small arms, she would cry out, "Hit her in the boomkins!" Did he but move amidships to rage among his cannoneers she would cry, "Plump her in the waist! Plump her in the waist!"

At that instant, Laffoon cried out, "She's afire! she's afire!"

Such, in truth, was the fact. Captain Polly's red cannon-balls had at last done their work. The xebec was in flames.

They put her about and ran her for the shore, but she grounded on Plumb Point Shoal, and the victors of the "Jim-Tom" soon saw their enemies taking to their small boats, and making for the mouth of Swan Creek, a little way to the west.

Captain Polly gave one more shot. It was a parting kiss for her old-time lover. Having turned her glass first upon this boat and then upon that, she at

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last spied the barge in which sat Captain Littlejohn with his body-servants and his belongings. She pointed out the boat and told Laffoon to take good aim. She almost patted the cannon-ball with which the swivel was now loaded; and she held her breath as the shot sped away.

The ball struck the boat and shattered it, and its occupants tumbled heels over head into the water. Now, the old Tory had sewed his gold into a long, canvas bag, and this bag was wrapped about the necks of his two body-servants. When these men were thrown into the water, the weight of the gold held them fast in the mud, and before they could be brought to the surface both were drowned. But the captain regained his metal, and, leaving his negroes to the fishes, waded ashore and disappeared in the forest that bordered the western rim of the great basin.

As for Captain Polly, she took the wind astern for Turkey Point, where she rejoined her fleet, and passed with the flood to Head of Elk; sending me thence post haste to Cockfoot's in order that I might urge forward the main train of succor.

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE FIGHT AT COCKFOOT'S.

THE mill village of Cockfoot Forks, in the Delaware State, was planned by the Swedes before the coming of Penn. It is at the spot where the Stage road crosses Willkill Creek, and it wears its name honestly for two reasons—to wit: First, it was anciently a notable resort of cock-fighters; second, two roads fork at right angles from the main road on the south side of the creek, in the manner of a hawk's claws. The main road, as I have said, was called the Stage road; the right, or westward fork, was known as the Portage road,—so named because it had long been used in the conveyance of stores from the Head of Willkill to the Head of Bohemia,—and the left, or eastward, fork was called the Landing road, because it led to an old-time shipping-place on the Delaware.

At the Forks stood a smithy, a wheelwright shop, a snuff-mill, and a grist-mill. The snuff-mill was dis-used, but the grist-mill ground for all the people of the region roundabout. This latter mill was a square-built, two-story frame structure, hip-roofed and massive. It stood, not at the pond-side, but many rods away from the pond, somewhat down a slope, and, of course, down-stream; and got its water through an underground channel, or flume, made of stout timbers, and so thickly covered that no one unfa-

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miliar with Cockfoot's would have suspected its existence. This flume was like a long tunnel, and was capable of conveying great volumes of water to the open forebay, which turned the current at right angles so that it breasted against the mighty water-wheel. The wheel took the water abreast in tubs of great length and discharged it in a heavy volume, topped with foam, into the tail-race below. Great sport did the old flume afford the boys of Cockfoot's, who, dropping chips among the eddies at its mouth on the pond-side, would scamper to the forebay, where they would wait for the chips to come to the surface and pass swiftly in at the maw of the thundering, spray-tossing wheel, which, though it drank a torrent at every turn, never gave sign of the quenching of its thirst.

It was on a balmy Sunday along among the noon-time hours that the skirmishing at Cockfoot's took place. During the night (which was the night of my return from Head of Elk), an express had come from General Smallwood, at Wilmington, warning us that a frigate with some three hundred British grenadiers and Hessian musket-men on board had passed down the Delaware, with Willkill Creek as the objective point, and the recapture of the barkentine as the leading purpose. "All this," General Smallwood had said in his letter to the "officer in charge," "is fresh from Philadelphia by secret service. Captain Sir Lounsbury Asquith is in command of the enemy's force, and he is said to be on parole; he is game worth snaring."

"The officer in charge" was Yarrington, who, hav-

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ing read this letter by candle-light, at once set all astir. He sent out alarms to the militia of the neighborhood, picketed the road to Cockfoot Landing, and despatched messengers to warn Littlejohn, who was known to be approaching with his Valley Forge caravan. Then, towards dawn, Yarrington started all the wagons that contained the captured stores on the Stage road to the north, with directions to the teamsters to branch westward at the first highway leading in the direction of Iron Hill and the Head of Elk. Towards sunrise, thirty Continentalers of the Maryland line—all shirt-men in brown, blue, and white—came down by the Wilmington road, and, reporting for duty to the “officer in charge,” threw themselves upon the stacks of bags and the piles of grain in the old mill to catch a few winks of sleep before the arrival of the enemy. At eight they were aroused to eat as good a breakfast as they doubtless had partaken of for many days; and, by that time, what with the coming in of our open-mouthed militiamen, and the galloping hither of some patriotic old squire or fustian-clad Whig, Cockfoot’s made a lively show. The sun beamed warmly, and the water from the icicles at the eaves of the mill dripped glancingly in his rays.

At nine we were all waiting.

At ten we were in a buzz of expectancy, for at ten the landing of the British was heralded.

At ten minutes past ten the van of Littlejohn’s Valley Forge wagon-train came in with a rush.

Curiously enough, the carts of the first section of this astonishingly long train were drawn by oxen.

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With commendable foresight the genius of the expedition had, at the start, caused these teams to be pushed on a day's march ahead of the rearmost wagons, and by much prodding, the powerful but slow-paced beasts had kept the lead even up to the hour of the critical dash at Cockfoot's. They came staggering and straining into the Forks on a run, with their tongues out, some panting and bellowing with white at their mouths, and the red of their coats darkened with sweat. Hardly had this section of ox-teams rumbled on without a stop over the bridges, and so across the dam, when a drove of cattle, followed closely by a great flock of sheep, passed also along; these in turn being followed by mule teams and teams of horses, each pressing the other amid crack of whip and shout of men and boys. Among the last wagons walked Littlejohn with mud-bespattered boots and clothing, and a face cut and bloody with the lash of his own whip.

"What a drive!" said he; "but thank the Good Lord we're here, and all on a Sunday morning! How many firelocks have you, Yarrington?"

"Seventy."

"And the British! How many have they?"

"Three hundred."

"I see small hopes," said Littlejohn, "of holding this mill-dam, for they can send part of their men across the creek below here and come at us head and tail."

"The best we can do is to gain a little time for you in order that you may put your wagons in a place of safety."

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"And where is that place?" said Littlejohn, with an uneasy laugh; "that's a matter I've been worrying over this long time."

"Waal," said the miller, in his broken, squeaky voice, looking neither at Yarrington nor at Littlejohn, but rather upon each and all of us in a general glance, "I think the best thing ye can do is to run yer waggins into Bitch Ditch Swamp by the old bark road. Yer wheels'll make no marks going in, and we can blow out the waste gates and flood all parts of the timber except that where ye'll seek refuge."

"That," said Yarrington, "is the best plan I've heard broached this morning."

"But," interrupted Littlejohn, "I have six-and-thirty wagons yet coming. "They're loaded with the best mutton ever eaten by mortal man,—sheep that were fed fat on Tred Avon grass and Choptank meal. Shall they fall into invaders' mouths? Can't we fight a little for that mutton? They'll be here in ten minutes."

"Go on," said Yarrington, "leave that to me. Take fifty men and push for the swamps of Will-kill!"

So Littlejohn, this time on horseback, and accompanied as a guide by the blacksmith of Cockfoot's, dashed forward to secrete his train in the swamp.

We waited five minutes, ten, twelve, but still no mutton-wagons.

Then Yarrington gave the word, and the bridge planks were taken up. The old miller blew out the dam, and the water passed with a roar and with a splendid show of foam into the creek below.

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The rapid lessening of the waters in the pond gave increase to the flood in the creek, which challenged all eyes in the matter of its currents, its eddies, and its legions of bubbles, each chasing the other with a speed and angry liveliness attuned to the general roar. By half-past ten the mouth of the flume on the pond-side was agape. At eleven it was clear of all water, save that which was dripped from the soaked timbers of its roof, and lurked in pools amid the recesses of its floor.

Hardly had the clock struck eleven when the belated rear of the Maryland wagon-train came up; and, simultaneously, the last of the pickets on the Landing road broke in with the news that the British were within a mile of us, and marching straight for Cockfoot's at the double-quick. With the bridge planks of the mill-dam up, and the horses too far spent to attempt escape by the Portage road, Yarrington said that all he could do was to form the wagons in a ring in front of the mill and fight.

Then my father, the miller, spoke up.

"The flume!" said he; "go hide in the flume, Mr. Soldier! 'Tis big enough to hide your carts and your critturs, and all your men. Run in your teams at the front of the smithy, and out at the back, and that will bring you down to the flume's mouth, and all your wheel-marks will be hid."

"The flume!" shouted Yarrington, excitedly; and one by one the wagons passed through the blacksmith-shop and into the flume, whose hollow depths had never until that day resounded to the thunder of hoofs, the rumble of wheels, or the oaths of men,

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half-beside themselves with the heat of adventure and the hurry of the hunted.

But by and by all within the flume lapsed into silence. It was as if a legion of cavalry, with its harsh attendant noises, had suddenly sunk into the earth.

"To the mill, Asa," said my father. "If our rats can hide from us, we can hide from the British."

So we ran for the mill, and passed within, whence from an upper window but a minute later I saw the bayonets of the British flash out into the sunlight at the wood's edge on the Landing road.

First came the skirmishers, who moved rapidly along the road. Then came the grenadiers in their red coats, and the Hessians clad in green. As this main body emerged from the woods it was deployed into a field and moved in battle order rapidly towards Cockfoot's, the men shoulder to shoulder, six-score abreast, each eyelash seemingly in line.

The skirmishers beat up every ditch, sedgy fence-corner, house, or other lurking spot, explored the smithy, the wheelwright shop, the mill. They did not find a living thing save the blacksmith's old blind hound, whose first growl was answered with a fatal bayonet thrust. Then up came Captain Sir Lounsbury Asquith and his whole force, who grounded their arms so close to the line of the flume that I felt my heart throb and my fingers tingle to the tips lest the thumping of the musket-butts on the thin covering of earth should disclose the hiding-place of our men. For, as you know, the ear of the soldier is well attuned to the music of grounding arms; and I

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verily believe that, had Asquith's first line been advanced by three paces, the peculiar thud of the guns upon the frozen strip of soil topping the hollow beneath would have led to suspicion and inquiry, and the discovery of our Americans in the presence of the enemy's undivided force. But the greater part of Captain Asquith's command tarried at Cockfoot's less than a minute. The young commander was filled with zeal, and, detailing a single company of Hessians to repair the bridges and to stand guard, he pushed on with his main body.

Our men in the flume scarce dared to breathe. It was finger upon lip and a choke to death, rather than cough or sneeze. Straw from the wagons was strewn under the hoofs of the horses, and each beast was fed to prevent uneasiness and champing. A neigh, a bite, a squeal, a kick would have betrayed all. So, too, no man was permitted to approach the light at either end of the tunnel lest the flap of a coat should by mischance be seen.

Now, as it happened, a greencoat belonging to the detail whose duty it was to put the bridges in repair, walked down towards the flume's mouth in search of timber suitable for his purpose. Glancing here and glancing there, he finally caught sight of hoof-prints an inch or so under water. Then he gazed for a moment curiously into the flume. Then he turned heel and ran. The secret was out.

When Yarrington saw the Hessian bolt he turned to the young Frenchman Bonfils, and asked, "How do you trap rabbits in your country?"

"In a box, as your boys in America do; but, Mon-

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sieur Captain," said he, "this is a box for a tiger;" and Bonfils swelled with defiance as he motioned towards the walls of the flume. "We have here," he continued, "twenty-three men, twenty muskets, three swords, and an impregnable pit. What more could we ask or wish for, since there is also food enough to last us a month? Mutton is good enough for me; nor do I anticipate death from thirst," he added, laughing, as he pointed to the dripping walls and the water at their feet.

"Bravo!" said Monsieur Briquet.

At that instant a sharp crack of fire-arms sounded overhead. The Hessians had boxed their rabbit; now they were after its skin.

"Well," said Yarrington, as the three men stepped back from their exposed position near the mouth of the flume, "we may try the *rôle* of tiger, if provoked to it, Mr. Bonfils; but just now it is our duty to draw in our head out of harm's way, and to curl in our tail so that the powder of the enemy may not singe it too badly. Mr. Briquet, I nominate you to the command at the other end of the flume."

Briquet bowed, drew his sword, and made his way along the dark and narrow passage to the opening of the forebay. There he found the "tiger's tail" well curled and as yet unsinged.

The Hessians above, seeing the harmlessness of their first volley, put their heads together and canvassed the situation. It was agreed that the discovery should be reported to their commander, and a runner was at once despatched up the stage road in the direction of Sir Lounsbury Asquith's advance

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party. Then twenty musketmen were stationed around the forebay at the mill end of the flume, and the others were concentrated at the flume's head. In a little while the latter body made a dash from the dam side. As I saw them swing downward with bayonets fixed, I held my breath and listened. "Pow! Pow!" There came the sound of two heavy volleys, and immediately thereafter the noise of a fusilade and the intermingled shouts, screams, and curses of men. I looked and saw the Hessians clambering back, some hatless, and some with bloody polls, caressing their wounds as they ran. The tiger had shown both claws and teeth.

Then came a long pause. Some of the Hessians lit their pipes. "They are going to wait for the return of their comrades," thought I. By and by three horses, led by a countryman, came up the Landing road, and these soon galloped off up-stream with the countryman in front and two Hessians following. "A patrol of the enemy," thought I; "they wish to guard against surprise from that quarter." Then a party of the enemy moved over towards the waste-gates. I grew uneasy. Mischief evidently was brewing; but I could not understand the purpose of the enemy. Those in the flume preserved a silence as profound as though they were in their general coffin. They were as if entombed.

Suddenly I felt a hand upon my shoulder. It was that of the miller. I could see by his manner that he was woefully wrought up. His poor old hands were in a tremor, and his eyes were glancing restlessly upon this and that.

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"Asa," said he, "while I was hiding in the big pile of corn I heard dreadful news. They have put a party of men on horseback and sent them post-haste to cut the old mill dam above us, and, now, as you can see, they are hammering down our gates. Do you know what that means, Asa?"

I looked at him hopelessly.

"Yes," said he, "that is it. They are going to try to drown our party down there in the flume. And who," he whispered, savagely, "is to blame? Why, nobody but me. I told them to hide there. I'm the one to blame!"

His self-reproof was pitiable. He was a man nigh upon eighty years of age. He was so thin-visaged that his bones and the blue of broken veins showed under his pallid skin. Rheum ran from his eyes, and water dripped from the tip of his nose. Yet this old man, my father, was still of great strength and great courage, and soon his wonted sternness came back.

"But do they think we can't die a-fightin', Asa?" he said. "We can die a-fightin', little Asa, and that we can, and that, by the great Jehovah, we will!"

He went to an old bolting chest, and, still mumbling, "And that we will, and that we will," took from beneath it a huge sword that had been made for him at the Cockfoot smithy. It was a curious sword,—a great hollow-backed weapon, in the hilt of which was secreted a ball of lead. This ball, being released at the moment of the stroke, rolled from guard to point and added immensely to the weight and force of the blow. With this sword a man could cut a goodly sapling through as a cook cuts a

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parsnip, and a full blow with the weapon upon a man's body meant death or dreadful maiming.

Such was my father's implement of death; but I wish to set it down right here that he was an honest, fine soul, and, moreover, a godly man, for on picking days he would put a Bible before him and pick the Scriptures into the millstones. He "could talk with the frogs," as the saying goes, and he loved the very shine of the sun in the heavens.

"And that we will, Asa," said he, as he came back, beating the white dust from his coat, and holding his sword in front of him. "And now," said he, "I'm going to say 'good-by,' for I must jump down into the forebay, and warn our soldiers in the flume."

I started up, intending to go in his stead; but he motioned me down commandingly, vehemently.

"No," said he, "I am going myself. You hide till they're gone. Save yourself. I've told you where you'll find my will, and now, boy, farewell!"

He looked upon me steadfastly, wrung my hand, and slipped down among the cogs. Very soon I saw him stealing along the great beams of the wheel-frame towards the forebay. To reach this he was obliged to pass within sight of the Hessian sentinels, and when I had watched him in his progress thus far I shut my eyes and placed my hands over my ears.

I heard a shot and a cry, and looked in time to see the old miller shake his sword towards the Hessians and dart in at the tail of the flume, his gray locks bloodied, but his spirit still unquenched.

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CHAPTER IX.

THE STRATAGEM OF BONFILS.

By and by I became aware of a signal from the flume. Through my rift in the weather-boarding I saw the miller's hands thrust outwardly along the southern wall in such wise that, whilst I could observe them well, they were invisible to the Hessians at the brink of the forebay's pit.

The miller was speaking to me with his fingers. He first addressed me thus: "Do you see? If so, put the point of your forefinger through the weather-boarding."

I did as commanded.

"Good," he signalled. "Make ready the instant you see the enemy dash to the other end of the flume to slide the big ladder down from the window into the forebay. Do you understand?"

I signalled "Yes."

"Then," said he, "dash down and bar the mill-door. Do you understand?"

I signalled "Yes."

"Be neither too quick nor too slow, but take it in the nick. Do you understand?"

I signalled "Yes."

Instantly the hands vanished, whereupon I crawled out from my hiding-place, and, with a watchful eye here, there, and roundabout, unslung the ladder from

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its fastenings at the side of the mill, and placed it in readiness for instant use.

But what was the meaning of this? What stratagem was contemplated on the part of our friends in the great underground corridor of Cockfoot's, which had now become a veritable dungeon-keep to them, and which seemed about to become a locker as grisly and as dread as that of poor seafaring Davy Jones?

Let us see.

Bonfils had prided himself a trifle too much on the backset of the Hessians, hereinbefore mentioned, and his spirits were high until the word reached his ear that an assault by overwhelming flood was imminent. He grew pale, thoughtful, irresolute, depressed. Yarrington sought to cheer him, suggesting the possibility of putting up a cofferdam or a water-tight barricade. Bonfils at once tore the suggestion to pieces with a French shrug and some little sarcasm or other, delicately pointed at the inutility of the scheme. But he soon rallied in spirit. From pallor and gloom his face presently reddened with delight. He clapped Yarrington upon the shoulder, and, in an eager whisper, said, "I will myself, acting alone, divert them at this end of the flume, whilst you scale the sides of the forebay with most of your men. Tack a ladder together, using wagon-tongues and spokes, and I will arrange the diversion."

"And how?" asked Yarrington; "at the risk of your life, I'll warrant!"

"Heavens! is it not at risk already! Now, listen,

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Monsieur Yarrington! You will have our men bring into this passage here every horse of spirit. This stallion I will mount bareback, and upon the back of each horse in the train you will place the carcass of a sheep. Do you not observe," said he to the amazed Yarrington, "what similitude there is 'twixt those dressed carcasses in the wagons there and a trooper, who, when in a gallop under an enemy's cross-fire, bends low upon the mane of his horse?"

Yarrington looked at the loads of mutton and smiled. Each sheep was trussed at the back with a stout gambrel of black alder; and there was, indeed, some such likeness as that which the eager Frenchman had suggested.

"Oh, smile, Monsieur Captain; smile, if you wish! But see! the likeness is perfect. Their forelegs are bent down like arms gripping the bridle reins, and their hind legs seem to thrust the stirrups tailward as in the ecstasy of speed."

"'Tis true," confessed Yarrington; "their very backs, skewered as they are, make them seem like riders that hug their horses."

"Yes," continued Bonfils, "and a little cloak on the shoulder of each will, I assure you, complete the illusion. Captain, may I attempt it?"

Yarrington was thinking cloudily.

"But, Mr. Bonfils," he said, "I doubt whether your horses will run at command and move in concert."

"What!" exclaimed Bonfils. "Do you not see how impatient every horse has become? The oppressiveness of the place is as much upon them as it is upon us. Mark how impatiently they are pawing

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and scraping the timbers under their forehoofs! The noise of the guns has excited them, and they will go out with a dash, I'll warrant you. Each creature, as you see, now considers itself stabled in inferno."

"And," said Yarrington, "each looks towards this lighted end of the flume as the true place of exit."

"Exactly, Monsieur Captain! Mounted with a sheep, each creature will fret a little; at the crack of the whip all will move in a general frenzy. Captain, it is strategy! I will draw the fire of every green-coat above us!"

"Then," said Yarrington, "arrange your troop, and Heaven help you!"

Thereupon, eight-and-thirty horses were speedily strung in tandem along the passage-way. In the lead was the stallion,—a savage beast, yet possessed of such intelligence that he seemed to understand the stress of the entrapped company, and to appreciate the honor of leadership in the coming dash for the full light of day. His coat was of jet black, but midway 'twixt ear-roots and eye-sockets was a white blaze, shaped like a star. Red nostrils, a glint of devilment in his shiny eyes, and a habit of biting at whomsoever came nigh, emitting as he did so a squeal of petty rage, were among the sinister qualities and characteristics of this spirited and courageous animal. Nor were the other horses of the string thus captained lacking either in bottom or fire. All were restless. Possibly they suspected the knighthood of the grotesque troopers by which they were bestridden. At any rate, when Bonfils had mounted he found himself in immediate peril of his life, as much

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by reason of the crowding and biting of his troop as by the trickiness and whimsical cavortings of his particular mount.

By and by all were subdued by a sort of tremor in the earth. This oppression of the senses lasted during some dozen ticks of the watch, when, looking up, Bonfils saw the rolling, white van of the oncoming flood. Then he passed the word for the lashing of the horses in the rear. Hardly had he uttered this command when he struck his spur-points into the stallion's flanks, and lashed him under the belly with the snake of his whip. The horse bit at his rider's boot-leg, screamed, and plunged out of the flume; but, as it happened, no sooner did he clear the flume than he ignored the bit, and leaped up the bank into the thick of the Hessians, beating their bayonets with his hoofs, and throwing their whole line into confusion. To Bonfils, taken aback, this was like a mortal wound; but it was no doubt the best thing that could have happened in behalf of our party, since it not only heightened the excitement at the very point of diversion, but gave all the horses following in the train just the time needed to clear the flume and close up for the final dash which the stallion, still unmindful alike of rein, spur, whip, or curses, now undertook of his own accord. For, no sooner had he vented the first heats of his rage upon the startled Hessians, than he bent his eyes upon the swift-rolling waters, and dashed headlong towards the flood. Bonfils was at first amazed, then stirred to his heart's core. When he comprehended the purpose of the beast beneath him, and heard the whole

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troop speeding along behind, he gave a great shout, and, with fierce play of whip, added to the frenzy of the moment.

As the flood came upon them the stallion bent his hams to earth and took a leap into the very comb of the wave, and thus, one by one, the horses were engulfed.

At the first murmur with respect to the coming of the water from the upper pond, each and every Hessian at the forebay stood on tiptoe with his face turned in that direction; and, when the excitement among their comrades incident to the charge of Bonfils began, they gave the tail of the flume hardly so much as a look; but, assuming that the whole business was about to be ended at the pond-side, ran headlong thither.

Seeing this, I slipped the ladder through the window and let it run with a thump to the forebay's floor. No sooner had the ladder struck than the old miller was at its foot, with twenty men around him.

"Mount, gentlemen, mount!" he cried, "and go it on the run!"

When I had seen our soldiers coming up, man by man, I turned and made my way as fast as I could to the lower floor of the mill, where I closed and barred the door. This done, I ran back again to the floor where the hoppers and stones stood, and would you believe it? there I saw every one of our Americans who had been in the flume,—every one save Bonfils. They had ascended into the mill without a wound, though many muskets had been let go

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at them; and they were now laughing, hurrahing, and shaking hands with each other in the glee of men who had escaped the death of vermin.

"Look!" exclaimed one, "see the water pouring into that reservoir below us! Hear the flood roaring through the very funnel in which we were imprisoned!"

"But yonder! yonder!" cried Yarrington; "look yonder in the swirl of water over to the north! Is not that Bonfils? Yes, comrades, look! It is Bonfils with his troop of muttons!"

And so it was. From our vantage point in the mill we could see the bold Frenchman and his swimming horses driven by a great eddy in the flood towards the north end of the dam; and as we watched, we saw him emerge with his tandem troop and gallop off towards the swamps of Willkill.

But even as we rejoiced in the escape of Bonfils, we saw Sir Lounsbury Asquith come up hot-foot, and heard him cry out, "Sprinkle your flints with grit, and lay hell-dust in your pans! Come on!"

Thereat he charged the mill and surrounded it with his men, and gave us as much pepper through the cracks and crannies and open knot-holes as he could shake out of his three hundred muzzles. But he was spitting like a wild-cat against the wind, and we burnt the skin of his followers with the black stuff, and sent more than one of them limping off as if they had trodden upon tacks. Still, we had no sweep on them, and could only fire hap-hazard through windows and through such chinks and wasp-holes as we were lucky enough to squint out

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of in the hurry and hullabaloo. We had no sweep with our muskets, as I say, and could only pop here and bang there; and there was not a particle of chance for us to jab them with our bayonets or nag them in their gullets with the points of our swords.

Naturally, they took to lurking. After the first dash they cut in behind the mill, which was just the same as coming at us behind our backs. We had neither eyes nor teeth in that direction, and very soon we became aware that they were ripping off the weather-boarding there and whacking at the timbers with their pioneering axes.

Our men became nervous. I could see them spit when they did not need to spit, and did not know they were spitting, and I could see them roll their eyes about and laugh in little snorts and jab with their fingers at their own bayonet-tips to see if they were still sharp.

As for the old miller, he sat on a pile of corn and bowed his head downward just as I have seen some philosophers do, looking constantly upon the ground wherein lie the seeds of life and the ashes of death. The miller held the hilt of his great sword in both his hands, and his head was cocked sideways a trifle. I knew he was listening to the breaking in of the British, and his patient attitude was just such as I had many a time known him to take when waiting for a great gray mill-rat to come out of a hole.

Briquet, on the contrary, was dancing about and talking to everybody. As for Yarrington, he was tossing up grains of corn from the palm of his hand and catching them on its back, just as you have seen

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boys toss jack-stones ; and his sword was still within its sheath.

But it does not take long for three hundred men to break through a wall of weather-boarding, and Asquith's men soon let daylight in upon us ; and, in spite of the fire we gave them, they made a rush. The dust flew, the smoke was blinding ; the cries were fierce. I could not see all ; I could not hear all ; but this I did see, and this I did hear,—I heard Yarrington cry, " Lay on ! in God's name, lay on ! " and I saw him split the skull of the first man who entered. I saw Briquet take the second, prick him till he spurted, and spike him through and through ; and then I saw the same mad Frenchman rush forward so far into the opening that his sword slashed sunshine, and only ceased to strike when he himself had been pinned to the ground with bayonets and struck limp and dead by the butts of many muskets.

Then my eyes again fell upon the old miller. He was standing sideways with the wall, and he was watching for the first head that might show itself at the opening. As I looked, Briquet being dead, I saw a grenadier thrust his front within striking distance, and then I saw the great sword sever his neck as if it had fallen to the axeman's stroke on the Tower block in London.

Again the old miller swung his blade in air ; but he never more gave stroke, for five, ten, twenty men came in, and he was pistoled in the breast and pistoled in the back and hurled aside with such fury that he sank deep in the great pile of corn by the side of which he had taken stand.

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But did Yarrington give way? Not a step, not a budge, not an inch. They cut him, they bayoneted him, they shot him; but he stood it for so long a while that we thought him born to stand forever; and, as he thus stood, he struck just as you have seen a man stand and strike at midges on a summer evening. Yet each of his strokes seemed to tell; and it was a dear price they paid for his blood,—those who at last beat him down and tore from his bosom the proud lettering of the mountains.

Meantime, the others of us cut sticks for our lives. Whilst our leaders were in the clinch, we had hung around like a pack of snarling hounds; but now we used our hamstrings nimbly in flight, abandoned the lower floor of the mill, and took post at the head of the stairs, where the millstones were.

Then, whilst some of us held our firelocks muzzle down, cutting the smoke with our eyes in search of an imp to let go at, others with slap and whack of boards torn from the bins knocked together a stop-gap and barricaded the stair-head with sacks of flour, meal, middlings, bran, and whatsoever they could lay hands on. In this way we held them below. They possessed the ground floor, we the upper floor, and we still had the loft, and the roof and the sky whereto we might flee. But the windows? The British outnumbered us twenty to one, and we knew that they would either attempt assault by ladder or by fire-brand. So Erb, of Stewart's Thirteenth, who had now become our captain, posted men at each window, and at one of these stood McGlinchey. By and by we saw McGlinchey run to the tread-wheel

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and start the mill. We heard the roar of waters, the thunder of the great wheel without, the rumbling of the cogs, and the whirr and hum of the millstones.

Now, I knew very well that, should the mill continue to run without grist, the place would soon be on fire by reason of friction, so I hurriedly poured into the hopper a bagful of wheat.

Then I looked at McGlinchey. "Arrah!" said he; "we've caught six of 'em in the big wheel on the outside. Hear 'em scrame!"

"Stop, stop, stop! In the name of Heaven, stop the mill!" cried Sir Lounsbury Asquith from below; "there are men in the water-wheel!"

And it was so!

This mighty wheel was shaped like a bass-drum, and a thousand times more thunderous. But for the huge shaft upon which it trundled, and the eight great beams, or arms, reaching out from the shaft to the rims, an elephant could have walked upright through it, and that, too, without squeezing his sides or scraping the hide of his back.

Into this hulky monster of a wheel six Hessians had crept, with the expectation of giving us a sly kiss with buckshot at the backs of our ears; and now there they were clinging for dear life to the shaft and the beams, and riding round and round and round and piercing the roar with shrill, beseeching cries,—victims of the very flood which they themselves had let down upon our men in the flume.

"Stop the mill! Stop it! In the name of Heaven, stop the wheel!" shouted Asquith; "tread down the

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windlass, or we'll fire the mill and roast every rat and rebel of you!"

Just then, having run to a little loophole on the creek side of the mill to see whether in case of fire we could jump into the water below, I caught sight of something that made my spirit leap and my eyes dance in jubilation. The race was still filled with an angry flood, and the waters were white with foam and all aspot with bubbles; but, in the stream and wading towards us, with their heads and shoulders just visible, and their muskets and powder-horns held in air, was a great body of bluecoats. At their head was Littlejohn. They were wading from around behind a cedar-covered islet, and were approaching the mill as silently as muskrats. These were the true-blues,—that I knew by the saucy way their hats were cocked, and by the swing of their shoulders. They were Smallwood's men,—the same trigger-kissers, who, as the war waxed old, clipped the king's talons for him at Cowpens, and took their never-ending furloughs in Camden fight.

I could see a hundred of them in the water,—two hundred, three,—and they were still pouring out from behind the island.

I ran back to my comrades. Erb was at the windlass, with his foot upon a spoke. "Here," said he to me, "tread down this thing and stop the mill. It's not for the threat," he added; "but it is fearful to hear the cries. We are not devils!"

"Yis, but by the Great Pat, we be sojers," protested McGlinchey; "an' what are sojers but divils?"

"Listen!" said Erb, "what's that?"

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There was a great stir below. The British had discovered the approach of Littlejohn's relief. We heard the pop of muskets, and threw ourselves upon the floor, and tore up boards wherever we could, so that we might look down. Our Continentals came in with a rush. They did not pause an instant, but set to with sword and bayonet and butt of gun. The fight was hand to hand, hot and heavy. In and out among the meal-sacks and over and through the piles of bran they fought. They pelted each other with ears of corn. They fought up and down the ladders and among the cogs, every Britisher trying to get out into the air, and our men jabbing away, and not caring a ha-copper how they warmed up their wet jackets.

"Look! look!" shouted Erb from the window; "the lobsters are on the run! See them make tracks for the woods!"

We hugged each other with delight; broke through our barricade; and, running to the great wheel, dragged out the poor Hessians, one by one. They were soaked to the skin, dizzy, bewildered. They were vomiting and all green about the gills. They tried to walk, but staggered and fell to the ground, where they lay like drunken men for many minutes.

Meantime, the battle had rolled away into the woods. Hardly a corporal's guard of us were left at Cockfoot's, but we busied ourselves in a hundred ways. Some brought out the dead, others rescued the mock troopers of Bonfils from the flood and strung them over a fire in front of the mill, so that our victors might not be supperless upon their re-

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turn. Down the Willkill a great light shot up, and we knew thereby that our comrades, having chased the British on board the frigate, had set fire to the "Bounding Bess." But it was near midnight before our people came tramping back. Their wounded were in front, and chief of these was Littlejohn. Strange to say, it was the miller's captured sword that had been used upon him. I was horrified when they brought him up to the fire and eased him down upon some straw quickly strewn as a bed for him. It appeared to me that his skull was split from the top of his head to the place where his eyebrows met.

CHAPTER X.

COALS OF FIRE.

IN the morning, Littlejohn was still alive, and, if I may say it of him, the devil was in his eyes. Overnight he had grown to look like his uncle. He had caused his black men to lift him into a wagon of shelled corn, and when the train started, he insisted upon going with us. In vain did Bonfils plead with him to stay behind. No, damn all creation, he swore, he would go to camp, stiff or limber. So saying, he set his teeth like a man with lockjaw, and lay back in the jolting corn. Nor did he again open his lips until three o'clock that afternoon, when, past Polly Drummond's, on the road to Kennett, he greeted

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Miss Leatherberry as she joined us with her wagons from Head of Elk.

It was a hard, long drive to Valley Forge. At times our progress seemed to consist of stops. Frequently the red mud was hub deep. It was as if every wheel were a millstone, and every millstone mired. Nutz, Ahn, Yost—good wagoners all, who could play a jubilant tune with an ox-whip on a frosty day, and all first-rate men in a fight—swore that our train was like an eel on wheels. Nevertheless, we got along. Many a hill was climbed, and many a creek, as bridgeless as the nose of Socrates, was crossed; and by day and night the whip-lash spoke its savage language,—a tongue untranslatable save in the ear of team and teamster, mule, horse, ox, and devil. Some of the men pelted their horses with snow-balls to urge them on. Shrill and savage were the shouts of the drivers; and if a poor beast broke a leg, it meant slaughter on the spot. Nor did we have certain knowledge as to whether the British were marching on the jump to head us off. For all we knew, Sir William Howe might come out in person and cut across the country and try his best to bag us. So we floundered drivingly on with the haste and apprehension of backwoods boys who, having robbed a she-bear of her cubs, are all too apt to think they hear the vengeful crackle of her steps in every thicket path and in every dark, deep briery forest clump.

Towards sunset of our second day's march, we gained a foretaste of our reward, for at that hour we came out upon a hilltop that overlooked the Great

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Valley of Chester, and from its crest Captain Polly for the first time saw the smoke of the camp-fires at Valley Forge.

No sooner had we parked our wagons than Bonfils said to me, "Come, Lankford, let's ride to camp!"

We set off at a gallop; yet, in spite of the character of our news, the first picket stayed us, and held us till the grand rounds at midnight, so that it was close to daybreak when we dismounted at head-quarters, and hurried towards General Washington's office, whence the faint beams of a candle-flame shone out upon the snow.

Bonfils tapped upon the window-pane with the end of a Hessian bugle, and the General paused in his writing, put his quill aside, and looked curiously out upon us. Bonfils saluted. The General lifted the candle above his head so that the light might fall directly upon the objects of his scrutiny. Bonfils bowed with his hand among his ruffles. Then the General arose, and, addressing a companion, evidently with a word of excuse, left his desk and disappeared. A few moments later we heard him lifting the latch, and soon we saw his tall figure in the doorway and heard his manly voice, pitched low, ask, "Who is it?"

"An express, your Excellency," said Bonfils, "with news of moment. You will pardon us the hour and our boldness when you have given us hearing."

"Is your message by letter?" he asked.

"No, your Excellency; by word of mouth."

"Come in," said he; "but I must request you to

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stand awhile in this entry till my business in hand is despatched."

Bonfils thanked him, and we stepped indoors and stood in the hallway, which would have been dark but that, in quitting us, Washington left his office door ajar. We heard him account to his companion for our intrusion, and then became aware that he was signing and sealing the letter upon which we had seen him engaged at the time of our arrival in front of the window.

"Now, sir," said he to his companion, "I have set down some plain words here, and, since you will be questioned by members of the Congress and the gentlemen of the Board of War when you have delivered the communication, it is only fair to you for me to tell you its purport."

The unseen messenger—a man of consequence clearly and one trusted with the secrets of the cause—murmured a few words in depreciation of himself, ending with the avowal that whatever the General wished he would convey in the spirit as well as in the letter.

Then Washington went on to say,—

"Sir, I have here set down under my hand that this army must disband,—must be dissipated to the several points of the compass,—if clothing, foot-leather, and food be not provided in liberal supplies within the next ten days. There are five thousand men in camp unfitted in toto for action; and, as I say here, the disbandment of the army must speedily follow, unless they be rehabilitated."

"It is a dark hour, General," said the other; "but,

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please, my dear sir, to remember how dark it was a year ago, and that the clouds were lifted."

"I know, I know," said Washington; "but that was a period of distress caused mainly by threat of bayonets. This present distress is a threat of starvation. What I have said is clear to me, and I will ask you to make it ring with clearness in the ears of those who stand in responsibility for the issue. The hope of America is solely now in that quarter."

This was too much for Bonfils. He gently opened the door, and with many apologetic gestures entered the room, saying, "Pardon me, your Excellency, but I could not shut my ears to your words; and now I cannot resist the impulse to beg that you may revise your message. Your pardon, sir, a thousand thousand times!"

Both Washington and his messenger were looking upon Bonfils in amaze.

The old brigadier, who, as I now saw, was sitting by the hearth, also started up.

Bonfils continued, "I cannot, sir, in the light of the news I bring, hear you say 'The hope of America is solely now in that quarter.'"

"And what is your news, sir?" asked the General, with some show of asperity, a rebuke in every glance.

"That France, sir, has declared herself in alliance with America!"

Bonfils stood erect with the pride of a prince of old.

The General seemed as one who hears but still listens.

"And whence your tidings, sir, and whence your welcome news? Have you particulars?"

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"It comes post-haste, your Excellency, from Head of Chesapeake, whither word was brought by a fast-sailing boat two days ago from North Carolina. They had it there on this Thursday last past, by ship from Toulon. The king has agreed to the alliance, and France will support America by land and sea. 'Tis as yet *sub rosa* to the powers, but the lightning speaks in the cloud!"

The General turned to his messenger and said, "Dr. Franklin has done his work well! 'Tis true, I doubt not. Nevertheless, it is necessary that we have food and clothing for our troops here. With increase of hope we must put forth increase of energy. French aid will reach us slowly. We cannot feed upon bread that is as yet across the sea. I will give this letter to the coals, but I must still request your good services in urging the needs of the army."

"I understand," said the other; "I bid you farewell, sir! Adieu! gentlemen!" and he forthwith departed.

"Ah, sir," said Bonfils, "I came near letting my other cat out of the bag; but, fortunately, I checked myself,—fortunately, I say, for it is just as well that they should not know at York of the substantial aid that will reach you before noon this day."

"Then, sir, you have a double message of good tidings?"

"Had I been Noah's dove," said Bonfils, "I should have brought to my master a wild rose and a fleur de lis! Briefly, your Excellency, I will say that a considerable train of stores from the South is among the

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hills across the valley, and will be with you in the course of the morning."

The General asked as to the number of wagons, and when informed of the sources, character, and strength of the supply train, he manifested the greatest pleasure.

He arose, lighted two candles upon the mantelpiece, and stood before the fire with his coat-tails parted.

Just then his glance lighted upon me, and he lifted his eyebrows. The fresh candle-light had revealed my identity. Bonfils saw the look, interpreted its meaning, and straightway explained in a few words my connection with the succoring party.

"I was mistaken," said the General, bowing towards me; and I, on my part, bowed. "And who is the leader of our foragers?" asked his Excellency.

"Ah," said Bonfils, laughing, "pardon my bluntness; it is he whom you ordered shot,—young Mr. Littlejohn!"

Again the General appeared as one who hears but still listens.

"Yes," said Bonfils; "there was bad wadding in the Conway verdict, your Excellency, and bad powder in the Provost Guard's muskets. There is a little mystery in this matter still; but I make bold to urge that when you see the coming forage your Excellency will acquit the forager of all attainit."

"It is mysterious," said the General; "but, as you say, a good work challenges the grace of acknowledgement."

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"And besides," whispered Bonfils, "the fellow is dying."

"Dying! Good God, sir, I hope not! Dying, you say?"

"Dying or dead, your Excellency."

At that instant the door swung open and Littlejohn appeared. With Juba to his right and Cudge to his left, bearing him up on their interlocked hands, he looked for all the world like a smitten king in flight from battle.

"What is this?" asked Washington, facing about.

"He is the man of whom we spoke," answered Bonfils.

"So?" said Washington; and then, with extreme softness, "Well, sir, what do you wish of me?"

Littlejohn was now within arm's length. The cloth had fallen from about his head, and I thought the skull would drop apart then and there.

"Your Excellency," said he, very quietly, "I've come to give myself up."

"There's no need of that!"

"But you put a stigma on me; you made me out a traitor and a spy."

"Yes, but you are neither! Good God, sir, no! I'll tell you frankly, sir, you've saved my army."

"And as the devil would have it," interposed the brigadier, seeing Littlejohn sink back, "he's lost his own life in doing it. General, this is revenge!"

"Revenge? I do not understand you," said Washington, as he helped the negroes place their burden on a cot.

"'Coals of fire!' 'Coals of fire!'" muttered the

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brigadier; "he has heaped them hot upon our heads. Zounds, yes!—upon our heads!"

At sunrise there was a great stir in camp. The whole army marched out to meet the relief train, and a feu de joi from seven thousand muskets was given as Miss Leatherberry, with a boot in each stirrup, led the van past the hillside, where Washington and his generals had taken stand to receive us. The army opened its eyes, I can tell you. Its change from despair to gladness was quick and absolute. There was a continuous hum of joyful exclamations. Cheers arose. One wagon, I remember, drew forth the thunder of a thousand throats. It was in Captain Polly's section of the train, and it was piled high with stockings. They were woollen stockings, and they were bluer than the sky, save at the toes, where they were whiter than snow. There was a wagon-load of them, and they were held in place by a shad-net, which had been cut and shaped and spread over them and roped securely down. You have many a time seen a great load of hay pass your door: now imagine a load of stockings piled as high as the grass, and also imagine Pfaff Laffoon's look as, sitting on his top-lofty throne, he gazed down from this mountain of blue stockings,—imagine these particulars, and heat them a trifle in the red glow of your thoughts, and you will understand why the army suddenly burst forth in a hip-hip, three times three.

As she talked with General Washington, Captain Polly's eyes were of the color of a brandied plum, fresh from the syrup, and shining in the sun.

"This young man," said she, squeezing my ear,

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"ought to be taken back into your service, General!"

Washington bowed, smiled, and replied that it should be so.

"I'm lodged at Quaker Hall," she continued, "and have young Mr. Littlejohn under my eye. Surgeon Pruitt attends him."

The General lifted his brows.

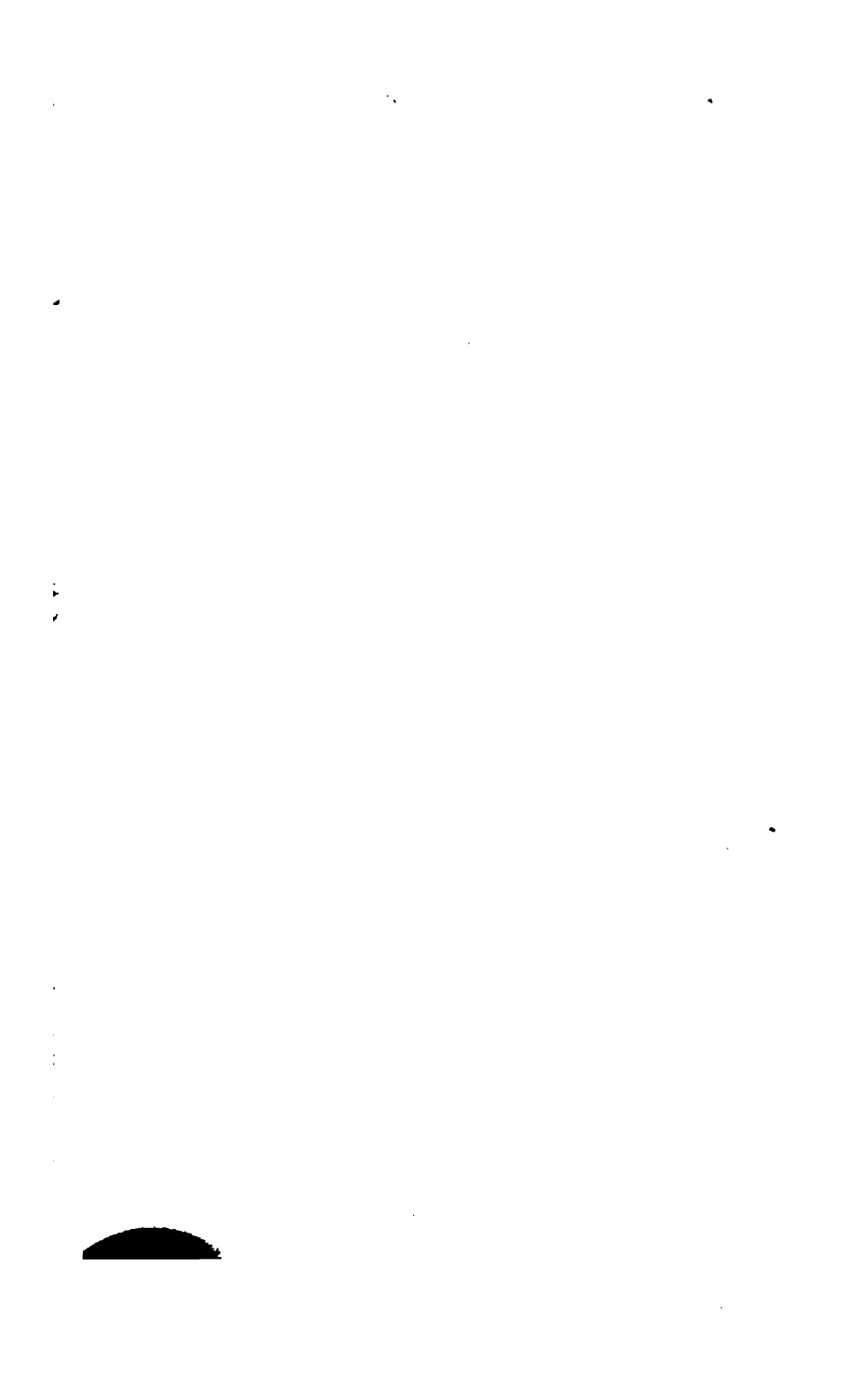
"As for the Tory Littlejohn," she went on, "I think it's your Excellency's duty to——"

"Hunt him down?"

"Yes; and then to hang him,—hang him, I say, eleven times as high as Haman!"

PART III

THE BATTLE OF MONMOUTH



CHAPTER I.

HONEST HANCE.

BUT what of the King's agents? And Mary Truax, —what of her?

Pinned down by duty to my desk in the attic of Head-quarters house (for the Baron Steuben was re-organizing the army and quills flew), I nevertheless kept my ears open for echoes of the drama which I felt sure was being enacted at York. Once I heard that General Washington had received a secret message concerning Alicia Gaw. Its purport I could only surmise. Days passed. Then I learned that Digsworthy Snaith was to become major of a troop of lighthorse, which was to spring cap-a-pie from Miss Leatherberry's purse, and which was to ride in the train of Lee. This great soldier, freed at last from captivity, was now in camp, and, in the course of the morning, it was said, would be with us at Head-quarters for the purpose of swearing perpetual fidelity to the cause.

Of course but few of us could crowd into General Washington's office, and I have ever regarded it as a pleasing fine matter that I was fortunate enough to gain the front and witness the solemn and ceremonious affair of the day.

I was not slow to mark the solemnity of the Commander-in-Chief. It was clear to me that he deemed the business of the hour of gravest significance, and

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that he disapproved of the mirthful spirit of the junior officers. In his eyes there was offence to both sanctity and dignity. For was this not an oath upon the Book of God, and was it not an eternal declaration of liberty !

Yet, solemn though he was, the General was most benign towards Lee. What was the secret of his fascination ? I cannot account for it. I have thought upon this side of the question and upon that. I flatter myself that I have boxed the compass of possibilities in the matter ; but I cannot, for the life of me, understand the secret springs of the business. Why was Washington blinded ? Why did he treat Greene as a subordinate, Lee as a superior ? That he did so I freely bear witness.

When General Lee approached the table to render high allegiance all sounds ceased. Washington bowed as he was wont to bow when in prayer. Then the Commander-in-Chief, lifting his head, read, in solemn tones, the prescribed form :

“Do you, Charles Lee, thus take oath in the presence of Almighty God ?”

A querulous smile came into the face of the Great Eccentric. He raised the Bible towards his lips, but put it down again.

“As to King George, I am ready enough to absolve myself from all allegiance to him ; but I have some scruples about the Prince of Wales !”

It was like a thunderclap. Then the ancient brigadier laughed aloud. Then somebody else laughed. Then the general company broke forth. Lee, in his conceit, thought the merriment a tribute to his wit.

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The Commander-in-Chief stared upon him in amazement. This was beyond him. He could not comprehend.

"'Tis the form prescribed by the Honorable, the Congress, in their resolution of the 3d of February last past," said he.

"Then," quoth Lee, with a sparkling smile, "I will kiss the Maiden."

As he put the Book to his lips the frown upon Washington's face softened, and he again assumed his expression of placidity.

A few moments later I was left alone in the office and decided to remain there until the return of General Washington, who had gone off for a ride, his aids accompanying. Hardly had I settled down to my work when Lee came back. I could see that he was agitated. I suspected from his mutterings that he was in an apologetic mood. He paced to and fro, talking to himself in a rough, grunting way. Had he been deep in drink he could not have acted more strangely. Finally, he cried, "Damme, if I'll wait the old cock in his coop a minute longer!" and, seizing a pen, began to write a note for his Excellency. Just then the door creaked. I looked up and saw, standing before us, the squat figure of the Lady Alicia's charioteer,—Hance Fuchslager!

"Bruder, wie gehts?" said he.

"Well," said Lee, "what do you want here?"

Fuchslager dropped his bag at the general's feet.

"Feel!" said Fuchslager, opening the mouth of the bag.

Lee thrust in his hand.

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"Good God!" he cried. Then checking himself at sight of my wide open eyes, he addressed Fuchslager in German, at the same time motioning for me to withdraw.

Did I obey? I should say not. I pretended that I had not understood. Lee spoke to me sharply in German. I gave him the blankest of looks and went on with my work. Thereupon he began to question Fuchslager, who spoke with freedom. It grew upon me that Fuchslager had mistaken Lee for Washington. I could not understand the Dutchman's words, but I was sure that I knew what he was talking about. Here was the very story I was burning to listen to.

"You are an honest fellow," said Lee, when Fuchslager had concluded. "I will take down your name, —I will reward you!"

When Fuchslager had gone out I watched Lee under my brows furtively. I felt his greedy eyes pass to and fro between the bag and the desk at which I sat. He finally took the bag up under his cloak. No sooner had he done so than I got upon my feet and handed him a slip of paper, upon which I had written, "General Washington will be back in a moment. Will you not wait?"

His lips moved as he read my message. His legs shook. His face became blue. As for his eyes, it seemed to me they were about to shoot out like musket balls and lay me low.

"Pert, pert, pert!" said he. Then he laughed. "Oh, but you're a good lad! I was about to ask you to take me to the General's closet. I'm hug-

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ging a plum cake, Jack! God Almighty, yes! Say not a word, sir, or I'll kill you! I'll tell all this myself."

I ran and wrenched open a cupboard door. Lee thrust the bag into the cupboard, and, turning slapped me on the shoulders laughingly a dozen times. Footsteps sounded in the hall, and the next instant General Washington entered, his cheeks aglow. The meeting between the two chieftains was like that of brothers. Lee's wit flashed and sparkled. I feared to be struck with a bolt of it, but cowered at my desk till the great master of dissimulation led his unsuspecting superior to the closet and disclosed the king's gold. Then I was out of the room at a single dart, my face burning, my heart thumping against my ribs.

I hunted high and low for honest Hance. At last I found him in the Head-quarters kitchen, whither he had gone to beg a meal. I threw my arms about him and hugged him with all my strength. I bore him off to my attic, where I served him with meat and bread and a bottle of the General's best Madeira, boldly stolen at the risk of my neck.

Though Fuchslager could read only the simplest words, he finally came to an understanding of what I wished him to tell me,—the story of his adventures with Alicia Gaw. At first he demurred, easing from his taciturnity only when he saw how zealous I was to serve Miss Truax. Then the wine got into his head and tears oozed out between his lashes. He placed his elbows on my table, rested his jowls in his enormous hands, and talked to me for hours. At every

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turn of his tale he commented philosophically on the particular folly disclosed. So uncouth was his language that I cannot repeat it, but the facts he gave me were, in substance, those that follow.

CHAPTER II.

FLIGHT FROM YORK.

ACCORDING to Fuchslager, the Lady Alicia gave signs of madness at York; but, as Hance himself was of simple nature, it is doubtful if he fully understood the workings of her mind. She had left word with Fitzpatrick at the Bald Friar for Captain Littlejohn to join her at the Seat of Congress. Upon her arrival in York she had put up at the chief inn on the Diamond. There she had curtained herself off from the public eye. Digsworthy Snaith alone awaited upon her. Snaith was lodged in a house adjoining the county jail, now filled with prisoners of Congress. Among these was Caleb Truax. Mary had a cot in the room of the jailer's wife, and lovingly attended her father. Snaith, it appears, was inter-knitting the situations, playing, as best suited him, upon the distresses of the Quaker maid or the secret frustration of Fuchslager's mistress. Once, after a visit from Snaith, the Lady Alicia sent Hance to clap into the Quaker's palm a letter commanding Fitzpatrick at the Friar to spirit the bearer into Philadelphia.

No doubt Fuchslager's main reason for thinking

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his lady out of her wits was the fury of her drives down the Bald Friar road. Of these there were three. As soon as her coach was out of sight of York the Lady Alicia would leap from behind the blinds, mount to the box, grasp reins and whip, and send her four horses galloping towards the south. Fuchslager says she raged like a devil. When twelve miles from York on the third morning she came upon Captain Littlejohn. He was staggering along with a pack on his back. The two greeted each other like loving catamounts, first scratch then kiss, and Fuchslager drove them back to town.

Late that night Fuchslager heard strange news. He was dozing in the tavern-kitchen when word came that his mistress was about to be seized. It was said that she had plumped the great General Reed a bribe of ten thousand guineas to throw Congress for Lee.* A company of dragoons was even then forming to surround the tavern.

Until that moment, be it understood, Fuchslager had thought the Lady Alicia an agent of Congress. She had been secret; she had played with the British; she had risked her neck and his, time and again; but he had all along flattered himself that he was laboring in the cause so dear to him. What should he do? Should he warn her of her peril, or should he hand over his whip and be done with her, then and there?

* I dared not tell this to General Washington, for fear of instant snatching up. He refused to open his ear to the charges against Lee, deeming one who hearkens to slander a greater knave than the slanderer.

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As he debated with himself he heard a hue and cry on the Diamond. He ran out. There was a crowd in front of the jail. A prisoner had escaped. Hance knew, without asking, who the prisoner was, but he hung about the edge of the crowd until he heard his own name called. Then he hurried back to the tavern. In the court-yard stood the Lady Alicia's coach. Madam herself, who sat within, was beckoning him. At her side was the young Quakeress. The horses were cracking their hoofs on the stones. Two mounted men flanked the chariot. One was Captain Littlejohn, shaking as with an ague; the other, muffled to his nose, was well enough known to Hance.

Habit lifted Fuchslager, perforce, to the box. He had made up his mind not to drive for the Lady Alicia; but before he could realize it he was whipping along on the last turn out of town. He saw ahead of him a clear stretch of road, and, bending back, stooped to the Lady Alicia for orders. Her right boot was pressed upon one pocket of Captain Littlejohn's saddle-bags, which, as Hance now knew, was filled with sovereigns, and her left foot rested upon the other end, likewise filled with gold. Snaith cantered along in front of the coach, piloting all; the captain, carrying a brace of pistols, rode as rear guard. At times Captain Littlejohn drew so close that his breath filled Fuchslager's ear. In the old villain's heart was doubt, though with his looks he defied double-trouble, as he cried, "Oh, gad, gad! If I had but a hole to crawl into as close-fitting as my grave will be! If I were out of this cursed country,

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and free of this miserable business! Oh, for a hole in the ground the size of my grave!"

Feeling thus, Captain Littlejohn did not expose himself to the expected assault from the rear, but under pretence of colloquy with the guide spurred his horse past the coach and sped along for five miles or more neck to neck with the lighthorseman.

Fuchslager, seeing that the natural companion and knight of the lady in whose service he was enlisted had left the tail of their party without a sting, opened a little leather window in the chariot's front and whispered in the best words he could muster:

"Both men are in front and no one at the rump."

"What is it you say?" asked Alicia, aroused from her meditations. Fuchslager repeated his words.

"Then do you drive over them," said she sharply. Fuchslager put his whip-lash right and left upon the shoulders, sides, and flanks of the horses till they ran as if possessed of wings rather than steel-weighted hoofs.

At the first outburst of speed both Snaith and the captain thought the dragoons were upon them, and they likewise put to harsh test the mettle of the beasts that bore them. For one mile, two miles, three, the whole party drove violently on.

By that time both Snaith and the captain were in the rear; and Alicia, sharp-eyed in starlight, observing them through the oval of glass in the curtain of her carriage, spoke up to Fuchslager, "Easy, easy, my good Dutchman! Do not overheat the gallant gentlemen who escort us. Easy, easy!"

"Easy it is, if you command it," said he; "but we

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are followed hot. I hear the pelting of the hoofs of those who come."

"Captain," said Alicia, opening a flap of the curtain, "the whip says he hears the dragoons coming. I thank you and your friend for placing yourselves betwixt me and their sabres. But can't we wheel into some by-road and give 'em the bob?"

"That," spoke up Snaith, "is what I've been intending to convey to your thick-pated driver for the last quarter of an hour. Just beyond the second house from this spot a road forks to the left. Let him slow up as he passes the house, break through the cedars and come out upon the fork two or three rods from its point of departure from the road we are now travelling."

"Chevvy-chivvy, chevvy-chivvy! Brush away!" cried Alicia. "Do you hear, my friend?"

"She's got the bit in her teeth," thought Fuchslager to himself; "and she knows more than any of 'em. She's smart; but that's what's the matter with her."

"Yah," he said aloud, "I understand."

"Whither does this new road lead?" asked Alicia of Snaith.

"Straight to the slate bluffs of the Susquehanna."

"Then go on!" said she; and Fuchslager once more gave his horses the lash.

As soon as he had made the turn he checked his string and threaded the wood in silence. He heard the dragoons clattering up, and was soon aware that they had halted. Then a flash of fire shot through the forest. The dragoons were burning powder.

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Alicia, who saw the light, thrust her body half-way out of the coach, listening.

"What do you find back there?" asked the leader of the dragoons.

"A tree bruised in the bark, and some beaten cedars."

"Forward all on the wood road," cried the officer; "and ride like the devil!"

Then it became a wild race and a blind one. Fuchslager set his teeth and swung backward and forward, his lash alone letting light in among the trees. The troopers, ravening after, kept up a thunder of hoarse calls one to the other. A dragoon, pierced by a tree-limb as sharp as a stake, shrieked out through the night.

"Hark!" cried Alicia, reaching up from the coach and clutching the reins. It was a tragic mischance for her. The horses, still obedient, were swung by her tug from the road that led gently down to the river and broke out upon a clearing on the crown of a great bluff overlooking the Susquehanna. The poor creatures became conscious of their peril when they had reached the verge of the cliff, and they stood upon their hinder-parts and beat the air with their forehoofs, but the heavy vehicle, rolling in spite of Fuchslager's efforts to stay it with the brakes, swept them off the brink and itself toppled over and fell upon the jagged rocks of the river shore.

Thus ended the machinations of the king's intriguer,—a fair girl, yet unlovable because of the accentuation in her character of qualities that ill become her sex, to which the world looks for its chiefest fragrance and delight.

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Unlovable she was in life, but most lovely in death ; for, as she rested betwixt two great rocks at the river's side, the brightening light of the new-risen moon revealed her face upturned and set in the smile of peace. Her eyelashes were closed as in sleep, her lips were scarce apart. Her shiny fine hair, unloosened in the fall, had rolled backward into the water of the river and was now in the caresses of the flood.

The horses, killed upon the instant, cumbered the rocks round about, and the fragments of the coach were in many places.

Fuchslager, stunned near to death, now came back to consciousness of his surroundings. He looked calmly upon the scene, but the pupils of his eyes grew big with awe when they had at last become fixed upon the Lady Alicia. He walked clumsily and with many groans to the spot where she lay.

"Lady! lady! lady!" he called, "are you hurt much, poor lady?" Then, as he placed his hand upon her forehead, he exclaimed,—

"Mother's rose! she is past hearing! She's gone to the skies!"

He drew her hair from the water and pillowed her head upon it.

"There, thou child," said he, "rest as thy mother would fix thee."

Now as it befell, Alicia's body was crossed at the bosom by her saddle-bags of coin very much as the upright of a cross is marked by the arms that distinguish it and set it off. This Fuchslager at last observed; and, in spite of the increasing pain of his wounds, he lifted the bags from the girl's body and

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thrust his hands first into the pocket of one bag and then into that of the other.

"Rich metal here," said he, "unless old Hance Fuchslager has been holding the reins for a sister of counterfeiters." But when he had bitten a sovereign and clinked it upon a rock, he said, "Nein, 'tis true!"

Then he looked again at Alicia's face and for the first time a pokerish feeling crept over him. Temptation and the shadow of guilt were upon him. Then he exclaimed, "Boosh!"

Arising, saddle-bags in hand, he stepped between the bodies of the dead horses, tore off a piece of the lining of the shattered coach and, pouring out the gold upon the breadth of cloth, dexterously shaped it into a sort of pouch, which he tied at the neck with a stout strap from the harness of the nearest animal. He reserved but three pieces of gold. Then he searched along the face of the bluff until he had found a crevice in the rock, and into the crevice, having first ascertained its depth by means of a long stick, he hurled the pouch with a force and precision that carried it into the secret heart of the great cliff.

This done, Fuchslager replaced the coin with some pebbles and bits of rock, and restored the saddle-bags, thus falsely weighted, to the position assigned them by the chance of tragedy.

Groping in the *débris* of the coach he found Alicia's reticule, dropped the three coins therein and placed the reticule in Alicia's hand. "Now," said he, "the people who come will find therewith to bury her; but how may they best be told of it?"

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He sat with his back against the cliff and rested his head between the palms of his hands. The first stealings of dawn were in the east, and a dim light came creeping upon the scene. He heard a bugle-call of the dragoons far up the river. Whilst he thus sat he became aware of the slow and cautious approach of a man. It was Snaith who came tiptoeing along, pausing now and then to listen and to glance around.

When Snaith saw the body of Alicia he started back, but approached and looked at her face intently. His sight rested for a moment upon the saddle-bags, and he sounded them with the butt of his riding-whip.

Fuchslager, hidden in the shadow, watched him, silently.

Snaith glanced at the carcasses of the horses and at the wreck of the coach; then he stooped over the bags, but, being startled by a low sound, walked swiftly away, following the river bank until he had come to a cedar copse, where Fuchslager, notwithstanding the dimness of the day's early light, saw him adjust his saddle-girth and mount his horse.

But even whilst Fuchslager watched the departing horseman, he heard the approaching footsteps of Captain Littlejohn, who seemed to be following Snaith.

The captain walked with a swift, jerky movement, looking to the right and to the left, and casting suspicious glances behind him. Approaching the body, he exclaimed in a whisper, "'Tis so, 'tis so!" Then, as he observed the saddle-bags, he started forward and put out his hand.

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Fuchslager uttered a low "clek," such as the squirrel-hunter uses when hiding in the forest.

The sound caused the captain to start back. He gazed tremblingly about him and looked towards the spot where but a moment before he had seen Snaith bestriding the horse. His legs shook, and he shuffled away from the body. Then, again looking about him, he made a quick dash, seized the saddle-bags and ran at the top of his speed towards the cedars. There he threw himself upon his horse and galloped away.

CHAPTER III.

FUCHSLAGER'S SECOND THOUGHT.

SECOND thoughts came slowly to honest Hance. Pottering around as he was among the fragments of Lady Alicia's shattered equipage, Fuchslager, in his dumb Dutch way, failed for a time to bethink him of Madam's companion.

Yet whilst his thoughts were as slow-motioned as the stars they were likewise as true; and even as the daylight crept up the sky so out of the murk of his understanding there now arose faint remembrance of Mary.

Hardy, honest, noble Hance! He held two of his fingers up in front of his eyes and studied them closely. He looked at their fronts and at their backs. He heaved forth a groan. Then he began to mutter to himself in German, and what he said

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may be translated thus: "So! Swei be swei—two make a pair! Hance, thy skull is thicker than pot-iron. No wonder thou couldst fall out of the lap of a mountain and live to hunger for a glutton's breakfast. It is worse and worse!"

Fuchslager had seen Mary Truax sitting in the coach at York; but from that time on till his morning soliloquy at the foot of the bluff he had not once thought of her. Throughout the ride she had been as still as death. Was she now dead, indeed?

Thus asking himself, Hance arose and looked about him. First he examined the boulders at the water's edge. She was not there. Then he bent his eyebrows frowningly together and searched for signs of her among the shoals of the Susquehanna. If she were there, her body had sunk into some deep pool,—into some dark lurk of trout and pickerel. He turned and looked long and hard upon the face of the bluff. Not a stitch of her raiment could he anywhere see.

The sun's red rim, meantime, had cut its way for a space above the marge of the Lancaster hills, and the great bluff of York was now well lit and shining. There were many snow patches upon the face of the cliff; and one of these seemed to Fuchslager as he again looked to be of a white different from that of the others. This patch was in the forks of a hemlock some twenty feet below the brink over which the coach had toppled.

"It is snow!" said Fuchslager, "it must be snow; but," he added, when he had once more fixed his sight upon it, "it is less like snow than like mother's

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Sunday linen bleached on a Monday and hung out to the whipping winds."

He limped along the face of the bluff till he had come to a path leading up towards the crown, and this path he laboriously followed, groaning with aches and pains and twinges. By and by he came to the roots of the hemlock in which he had seen the white patch and looked up the tree.

"It is not snow," said he, "it is the white of the sweet lady's petticoat."

Fuchslager, let me again remind you, was a man of enormous strength of shoulders. He now set to work rolling rock towards rock and lifting stone upon stone, nor did he suffer himself to take breath until he had heaped up a stepping-place to the lowermost branches of the hemlock. Then, swinging himself upward, limb by limb, he speedily came to poor Mary's perch. The girl's body dangled like a stricken bird, head down among the embracing and upholding branches of the tree-top. Fuchslager saw that one leg hung limp and twisted, and he knew that it was broken. He glanced upward towards a ledge of rock.

"That was done there," he sighed; "she struck upon it as she fell, and then bounded off into the air and lodged here where she now sleeps."

He placed a hand above Mary's heart. Then, with a groan, he lifted himself higher, broke off a bit of an icicle, and held it to her lips. He thought he could see signs of moisture. He laid his ear against her bodice. There was a beam of sweet humanity in his eyes.

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"It beats, it beats!" he said. Then, without more ado, he took the maiden in the grasp of his left arm, and with the powerful aid of the other swung himself down the tree. From the roots of the hemlock he passed steadily to the foot of the bluff, and thence, with Mary still in his grasp, he hurried along the river's edge towards the south. At times he paused; but only to put an ear closer to the girl's heart. "The sun is warming her," said he; "but I must speed along." Fuchslager did not know whither he was fleeing, nor did he seek to know. Honest Hance! To him any house was a home if there were but a woman in it. Had he seen the walls of ever so humble a hut on the far shore of the Susquehanna he would have sought to ford the river with his burden held high above the water. Here in his arms was a spark of life, and he embraced it as though it had been the last spark of humanity on the crust of the earth.

Hance acted in this way not because of any particular thought or notion of his own, but because of an inherited kindness. His mother had taught him this. By the rose in his mother's garden, this was what he must do! That was all there was in Hance Fuchslager's philosophy. By and by he came to a little skiff, chained and locked to a staple in the rock by the river-side. He glanced first at the swift current amid-stream and then at the stony road ahead of him. He gave thought for a brief space. Then he placed the girl in the bottom of the boat; tore off the chain, and seizing the paddle sent the skiff spinning along down-stream.

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It seemed to Fuchslager a long, long, time before he came to a house, but at last he saw a cabin by the river-side. He paddled to the landing, gathered up Mary in his arms, and without knocking entered.

"Here," said he to the woman whom he met, "is one who needs care or she will die."

"She is dead already," replied the woman.

"She is not dead," said Fuchslager, "and there is no call for death. Sister, are you from Ephrata?"

"Yea," said the woman.

"Then," said Fuchslager, "here is one like the Mother we read of in the Bible; but she needs your care."

"Amen," spoke up a crone in the chimney corner; "fetch her hither! She shall live!"

By great good luck Hance had happened upon the abode of the seine-knitters of Ephrata; by the chance of the hour he had come upon ancient Sister Sarah, who, herself now nigh upon a hundred years of age, could still make the strongest mesh and deal the best bolus of any person, brother or sister, in the community by the Cocalico.

Having in this manner given the Quaker maid into hands far tenderer than his own, Fuchslager struck out across country for York, where he rattled the knocker on the coroner's door, and gave himself up. The inquest upon the body of Lady Gaw was held at the foot of the cliff, and upon Fuchslager's evidence the jury based its verdict. Madam had met death while in flight. Her true name did not appear.

As for Fuchslager, he was given his freedom with the injunction to remain within call near York for

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three months. He had told an open story save for two things withheld,—he had said not a word about the pouch of gold in the cliff, nor had he spoken at all of the girl in the seine-house by the Susquehanna. Hance was thinking very slowly, but he was thinking!

One idea that hooked itself like a burr in Fuchslager's mind was to hunt down Snaith and the captain. He took their trail at once, and, piecing scrap to scrap, learned for himself the story of their flight.

CHAPTER IV.

SNAITH AND THE CAPTAIN.

As I now know,* Snaith's first feeling when he had crossed the Susquehanna was that of relief at his escape from peril of body and disgrace of name. Then he shivered with the cold, and in the midst of his outward shivering he shuddered inwardly as he thought of the fate of Alicia, and especially of the looks of her body as it lay prone among the rocks,—a thing pitiful even to one so shy of pity and so cunning in cruelties as this same politic Digsworthy. "Fiddlededum," said he to himself; "I will ride along at a canter and whistle to keep my lips from turning purple. By and by the sun will warm me up, and meantime I will prepare for a breakfast in

* Lankford here makes a marginal note, referring to a letter, signed "D. S.," found among the papers of General Charles Lee.

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the very near future by clearing my conscience of all that's happened in the very near past. In these times, alack! a man must look sharp for himself or he'll be beaten down until he's no better than a clod. So far I'm not behind; I have a Continental commission in one pocket, and golden tokens of royal confidence in another. Galloway thinks well of me, and so does the Board of War. I ride between the two towering Georges. It goes well in spite of last night's horrible nightmare. Yet I'm splotched with that business,—I'm splotched with it. Good Heavens! What a ride! What a tragedy!" He was ascending the brow of the hill, and paused to review the distant scene of Alicia's death. The sun was now shining broadly upon the river, and against the rocky bluffs beyond. He could see far along the Susquehanna's shore; and in sweeping it with his vision he caught sight of a flat-boat in which he could distinguish two men and a horse. The boat was making for the point at which he had landed.

"Humph," said Snaith to himself, "they seem to be hurrying across. Perhaps the passenger is the captain. It is he, in fact! it is he! Well, I do not wish to meet him, I must say; and so I will jog along."

Snaith gave his horse the rowels and dashed away. The sun was just rising and was well towards his right when he thus struck spur to flank; it was upon his left, and near setting, when he dismounted in front of an old log-house at the foot of Ephrata Mountain and took the saddle from his flagged, blown, and trembling horse. He looked backward along the way

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he had come and said, "My horse is spur-galled. He must have a breathing spell, and I must have food. If that wretch who is dogging me comes up with me here I shall whack him over the head to the best of my ability. It is better to ask a bite at this poor cabin than to run the risk of a scene in the village. But why, in Heaven's name, should that man follow me? Last night he was a coward; to-day he is a demon!" He paused, listened, and drew his sword. He had heard the thumping of hoofs around the bend in the road.

The captain was indeed demoniac in his ride that day. He had hardly quitted the banks of the Susquehanna when, in caressing with a chuckle of satisfaction the pockets of his saddle-bags, his hand felt the jutting corner of a broken piece of rock. He nervously passed his palm over the bags, and as he felt beneath the leather not one rough point merely, but a dozen, and detected the presence also of rounded pebbly objects altogether unlike his precious sovereigns, he screamed with rage. He thrust his hand among the stones, first upon one side then upon the other, and screamed again as, emptying the contents of both pockets upon the ground, he said, aloud,—

"Snaith has stolen the king's money. It is Snaith! A knave, a miserable thief! Oh, why did I not go first to search at the foot of the cliff! He has stolen the king's money; but I will follow him and kill him,—kill him!" He struck his spurs into his horse's sides and laughed as the poor beast leapt forward with a squeal of pain. Many a wayfarer gazed in amazement after the two horsemen as they crossed

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the county of Lancaster that day. One would say, "There's big news going express from Little York to camp."

Another, "This last one must be chasing a spy."

Another, "No wonder the army people are trying to impress our horses if that is the way they use them up!"

And the captain, in truth, did wear out his horse, for the poor beast gave under about an hour before sunset,—a mishap which caused him to buy at a great price a fresh horse from the stable of an Amishman who knew the color of gold; and it was upon this fresh and well-fed beast that the captain thundered up to the cabin, in front of which stood the man whom he had followed so far and so fast.

"Scoundrel!" said he, as he sprang to the ground, "give me your stealings, or, by all that breathes, I will let the breath out of you here and now!"

"Fool!" said Snaith; "I have none of your gold except that which you gave me with your own hand willingly."

"You lie! You emptied my saddle-bags at the cliff on the Susquehanna."

"You yourself lie! I saw the plunder; but I scorned to take what you, following, seized upon!"

Thereupon, they set to, the one with the recklessness of a furious man, the other with the coolness and doggedness of a skilled swordsman brought to bay. Thus mismatched, the issue was speedy.

Captain Littlejohn, run through and beaten, fell bleeding and senseless upon the ground.

Snaith, without so much as a word of explanation

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to the frightened women who stood in the cabin doorway, mounted the fresh horse of his vanquished foe, and galloped off up the slope of Ephrata Mountain. Two days later he appeared in Miss Leatherberry's circle at Valley Forge. He was like a dandiprat fresh from the bandbox. He wore a dark-colored great-coat, with satinet cape, and sleeves lined with red tillet. He bubbled over with the gossip of Congress and the Board of War and the sociable news of York, and likewise entertained his listeners with the freshest talk of Lancaster, where the State government daily gave forth entertaining bulletins of Whig triumph and Quaker discomfiture.

CHAPTER V.

RED BIRDS IN THE BUSH.

ON the very day my work at Head-quarters was finished, Snaith began to organize the Leatherberry Troop. Some speak of this troop as the Lee escort; but, in the army, it was known as Captain Polly's horse. Of course, we of Cockfoot's could not do better than enlist in the troop, and enlist we did,—Bonfils, Beaujeau, Hinch, Lynch, McGlinchey, Eno, Grish, and Shallcross,—yea, nigh upon three hundred men, all told. And whom did we pick out as our surgeon but Pruitt; and who became our *beau-sabreur* but Updegraff? I was chosen as the trumpeter; why I know not, unless it was because my

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comrades thought me entitled to make some noise in the world. As for our horses, most of them were bays, some blacks; but Bonfils mounted the only stallion in the troop,—the same untamable beast that had led the file in the dash from the flume.

After our first drill, which was under the eye of Baron Steuben, I visited Littlejohn at Quaker Hall. He was sitting up in bed. The gash in his forehead had knit, leaving a scarlet ribbon stretching from scalp to eyebrow. He told me he had just asked Miss Leatherberry for the vacant captaincy in the troop.

“And I shall ride ‘Topgallant,’” said he.

Then he showed me a letter. It was from the Quaker maid. She had heard of his escape and of the good he had done. No word she could send, she wrote, could express what her heart felt. She had heard he was like to die; but no one need fear to die in flush of honor. She herself, she added, had gone into the city with her father, who had determined to follow the British. In conclusion, she prayed God to restore her lover, in which event she hoped he would ride “Topgallant” in Miss Leatherberry’s cavalry.

With the letter had come the horse.

It was now late in the spring, and the whole continent was astir. Littlejohn led his squadron at every drill. He was extremely melancholy, but wonderful in his new strength. When out of the saddle he was as saddening as the laugh of Lazarus; when riding with the troop he was as bold and mad-minded as any dare-devil that ever leapt a ditch.

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Many of those who had served at Cockfoot's with him remarked upon the change in his nature. The Baron Steuben swore at him as a fiend let loose. Miss Leatherberry sprinkled some friendly pepper upon him; but, though he was low-voiced and courteous in his speech to her, he breathed out a chill with every word, and hurt her with the reserve of his eye. If she had known of the ferret jealousy down in his pipes gnawing him, she would not have minded his manner; but one day she took offence and cried out to Snaith, "What! major! let's give the British a rap to-morrow. We're wasting horse-flesh gallivanting and plaudit-hunting round and round the edge of the camp."

In obedience to the wishes of Miss Leatherberry, the troop was put on the outer line that night, with instructions from Head-quarters to advance the next day as near the city as prudence might permit.

At day-dawn the troop set forth on its maiden raid. It was a glorious morning,—silver light in the high clouds, sun streams between the leaves, May buds in the grass, and an air abroad to delight one's lungs. Captain Polly was simply lively and lovely, and as brisk as a bluejay. She had torn her habit, and called out to Littlejohn as she rode for the front, "I always did tear my frocks. Ever since I was a mite of a thing it's been rip, rip, rip, and I do believe I'll tear my shroud when they're putting me in my coffin." The troopers laughed. It was jolly fine soldiering, this.

Thus we passed along for many miles. Videttes were out. We felt secure. Captain Polly expressed

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a wish to reconnoitre a dark wood road that led down into a ravine. Snaith accompanied her, with a guard of six some distance in their rear. The body of the troop was halted on the main road.

As she rode down by the side of the dashing brook Miss Leatherberry saw many pretty patches of red in the briars and bushes.

"What a multitude of red birds you have in this part of the country," said she; "we have a number of them in our Virginia brier-patches, but you Pennsylvanians are richly blessed with them."

"Red birds?" said Snaith.

"Yes, red birds," replied Captain Polly; "don't you see them?"

"Where?"

Suddenly a hundred grenadiers swarmed out upon them.

"Red birds!" gasped Captain Polly, as she threw up her hands; "they are red devils!"

Snaith turned his horse about and fled. Miss Leatherberry was a prisoner.

At the same moment we on the main road saw ancient Billy Chinquepin and his son Appalach, the only Indians in our troop, come riding towards us on the dead run, both as hot as a house-top on a mid-summer day.

"Dragoons! dragoons!" cried old Chinquepin; "here they come a-hellin' up the hill!"

We unslung our musketoons and blazed away; but the British were upon us in whooping squadrons, each man with his blade lifted, and each horse with a steel prod in his flank and frenzy in his eye.

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And what did the Leatherberry Lighthorse when it had rallied from the shock? Alas! it rode crest-fallen back to camp, leaving its Captain Polly to the mercies of Tarleton the Bold.

As for Littlejohn, he had one satisfaction out of it.

"Lankford," said he to me a week later, "I've done something that takes a load off my heart,—I've put Miss Truax in good hands. See this! Miss Leatherberry writes to me, lovingly, in answer to a letter of mine, that she will care for Mary as for the apple of her eye. Now I shall no longer fear. She will shelter Mary; I will take care of Snaith! I feel so good I could get down on my knees!"

CHAPTER VI.

LOVE AND DUTY.

It was the 18th day of June and a hot morning.

Valley Forge was astir. Word had come to camp of Sir Henry Clinton's evacuation of Philadelphia. Royal legions and loyal gentry were in flight towards New York. Here was a great piece of news. Clinton, as rumor ran, was not only encumbered with the impedimenta of a grand army in retrograde, but with the plunder of a capital and the exiles of a province lost *in perpetuo* to an obstinate king. What a target for true-blue muskets! What game for your revengeful Whig!

"Hearken to the fifeing and the drumming," said

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Laffoon, as he watched the American army break camp. "Summer's the time of thunder, battles, sour cream, and true love. Will Proudfoot, of Annamessex, twist yourself a new whip-lash. Hear the cry! Hear the cry! 'Forward, march! Forward, march!'"

"Laffoon," said Proudfoot, "the old General is after you again; he vows you pester the fifers and make 'em pucker for a laugh just when they should be whistling their tunes."

The army crossed the Schuylkill and filed away for Bucks and Coryell's Ferry on the Delaware. It was now twenty thousand strong, and Steuben was justly proud of it. Snaith and a few of the troopers were assigned to temporary duty as the body-guard of Lee, but the mass of the Leatherberry horse did not follow the northerly trail of the Continentals. "Hang upon the enemy's rear," was the order; "observe and report; strike with prudence, but strike hard."

This leaped with our wishes, for we thought ourselves in duty bound to rescue Captain Polly. Might they not take her to England, and do with her as Queen Elizabeth had done with Mary of the Scots?

At the moment this fearful possibility was suggested we were fording a stream westward of the Delaware. Far, far to the southwest we could see a majestical high cloud, peaked with white, but in bulk and body of a color something betwixt smoke-black and Jersey blue. Could we have transported ourselves to a point beneath the cloud our minds would not have been eased with respect to Captain Polly. We should have been in the city out of which the last files of the

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British army were hurrying. We might have heard Ruth the house-girl of a certain mansion, talking to herself: "Puff, puff, puff! Fizz, fizz, fizz! Powder, powder, powder! What stuff on earth, I wonder, will kill these things? Here I am, deserted of red-coat lovers, firing away like General Washington at the enemies of our beloved country. Ah, me! I wonder if the blue-coats now coming in will look twice upon me! These wars make me old before I'm wed. Puff, puff, puff! Powder, powder, powder! If that bed ben't clean, then somebody else may kill 'em. I'll blow no more poison!"

"And there's the great Virginia lady going off in her coach. Why they take her with 'em is a mystery to me. And there's a pretty Quaker girl stepping in beside her, and old Caleb Truax, too, is climbing in. She must be his daughter,—that young miss. Yessum, yessum, I'm through up here. It's fizz, fizz, fizz! run, run, run! Ruth Ann, you'll die of work!"

Past Crosswicks we got in between Sir Henry Clinton's main army and Knyphausen's grand advance, which guarded a train of baw horses, twelve miles long. Littlejohn swore that from a tree-top on a hill he had seen Miss Leatherberry's coach and four taking the dust of this vile train. Thereupon Updegraff and Bonfils went off as scouts. Their lurk was in the thickets and along the brier-fringed streams; the troop itself kept close to cover in the midst of the pines that flanked the road to Monmouth. This was towards the end of a sultry, showery day. Of a sudden, the patrolling troopers appeared among us. They were out of breath from a long run; and Bon-

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filis was all a-heat and a-cock for bold and instant action. His face seemed afire; his neck and hands were torn with thorns and streaked with blood.

"This way!" said he. "Silently, all!"

Then followed an hour of extremest activity.

Every horseman's jacket was lined with scarlet, and as we hurried forward through the thicket we turned our trappings inside out, simulating a squadron of British Light Dragoons.

We knew very well that to be caught in red was tantamount to hanging; and I, for my part, made up my mind not to be taken.

All expected that we were to make a dash; but as we drew near a fork of the road along which Knyphausen's train was moving, the artful Bonfils slackened his gait and, riding with a devil-may-care manner straight up to a chief wagoner, said, "Orders from the general! The bridge across the river beyond here is broken down. You and all who follow are to bear off on this branch road."

"Any teams on the bridge when it went under?" asked the man, curious but unsuspicious.

"Yes; nine were doused at a clip. Some horses were drowned, and the devil got a driver or two. You'll find a guide at the first turn there. Whip up!"

Wagon after wagon was thus diverted. We stood to horse at the parting of the ways. The teamsters and the guards gave us but passing glances; for they were concerned at the approach of a great storm, whereof threats now came in unmistakable growls and booms and mutterings from the west.

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At the head of the Lighthorse sat Littlejohn. His features were twitching, his eyes dancing, his sabre-hand playing with his hilt in a tap-and-grip game, betokening his excitement. He had caught sight of Captain Polly's coach, which now came trundling along the road, with Cæsar Leatherberry riding position, and Juba holding the reins. By Juba's side sat Caleb Truax. On the coach-top, in rear, crouched Milly of Mobjack and Lize of Piankatank, glum, dust-covered, woe-begone, each as black as the gathering clouds. The blinds of the coach were drawn.

As the carriage drew along abreast of us, Bonfils rode up to Cæsar and spoke a sharp word in his ear. Cæsar straightened up in his saddle, rolled his eyes around upon the troop, and put whip to his horses. As they dashed forward along the unobstructed way the whole troop followed and sped sharply on for the good part of a mile.

"Hot pot, gentlemen," spoke up Miss Leatherberry from behind the curtains; "but you gave us a bad scare!"

Mary's face was as pale as that of the Mother of Grief, but the light of a smile came over it as she greeted her lover and gave him her hand.

We had captured the coach, but what were we to do with it?

We were surrounded by the enemy. They were marching to the north of us and to the south of us. We dared not push eastward; but if we could pass through Knyphausen's rear-guard we might come out on a range of hills to the west, and perhaps draw within shelter of the picket-line of Lafayette's ex-

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treme advance. One thing favored us,—the gathering storm blackened the forest almost as if with night itself.

We heard the crack of alarm-guns and the noise of approaching cavalry.

It was decided to abandon the coach and put its occupants upon horseback. The crimson velvet wherewith the coach was lined speedily furnished regimentals. Newly clad in red and mounted in the thick of the troop, our fair recruits could not be told from cavalymen. The coach horses were pressed into service. Caleb Truax, still in brown, rode by his daughter's side. He looked like a Jersey Quaker who had volunteered as guide, and he bent low over the mane of his horse. The negroes, likewise in saddle, each bore upon the rump of his nag a dusky *vivandière*.

Thus accompanied, we pushed through to the west, and, coming out upon the road along which the Hessians were marching, trotted in fours boldly towards the rear-guard.

I will tell you frankly that I deemed this movement an act of folly. Some of our men were frowning mad and hot with desperation to think of it. As we approached a great woods the storm burst with terrific play of thunder,—with flash and clap and sweep of wind. In the road leading through the woods was a long column of Hessian infantry. They were marching with bayonets fixed, four abreast, and crowded the road as far as the eye could see.

Littlejohn rode forward and spoke to the officer in command. "General Knyphausen," he said, "wishes

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the cavalry to pass to rear and join Sir Henry Clinton, who is menaced by the enemy."

We heard a gruff word in reply, and trembled as the officer turned and uttered a command, which was echoed far down the column. He spoke in German. His words were magical. The Hessians opened a way for us; half of the column moving to the right of the road, half to the left. Then from our front came a loud cry, "Gallop!"

Spurs struck blood deep. We passed down the lane of musket-men in a rollicking wild run. The mud flew, not in specks and splashes, but in broad-sides. Every trooper was soon encased in it. At the woods' edge, on the right of the road, stretched a long line of Hessians, and to the left was another long line. We could see them only in the lightning's glare, but this was sharp and incessant, flash following flash, and at each illumination long lines of brightly-polished bayonets gleamed and glistened. Never in my soldier life have I seen aught that approached this ride in grandeur,—the play of Jove's fire upon the white bayonets, the break-neck dash of our troopers, each of whom knew that a slip, or a snapping belly-band, or a misstep upon the part of his frantic horse meant instantaneous trampling to death; the indescribable noise of the hoof-whacks in the muddy road, the sound of the tempest in the forest, and, finally, the tremendous explosions of thunder over all.

This scene, I say, I shall bear in mind as long as I live. Nor shall I ever forget the looks of Bonfils, as, riding the black stallion of Cockfoot's, he led the

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van. No, nor the savage face of Littlejohn, who, with one hand held out to grasp his sweetheart should ill-hap betide her, still gripped his blade with the other, in readiness to cut his way through the Hessians, if, perchance, they meant to ambuscade us.

Once past the enemy, we took a flying trot, and kept it up till we were out of harm's way.

The storm rolled over and the day cleared with the loveliest of rainbows I have ever beheld. This we first saw as we approached the crest of a range of low-lying hills, which formed the western rim of a valley. The bow was not high in the heavens, but seemed to rest against the eastern slope of the dale. Rain-drops innumerable were among the trees and in the grass, and the air was filled with a peculiar soft luminosity that challenged the imagination and made each of us feel that he had ridden into the realm of the fairies, if not in sooth into that of the Olympians. The complaining chirp of the robins by the road-side was the only sound then audible, save the hoof-beats and the clink and clank of steel accoutrements. The troop halted upon the crest of the hill, and we gazed in silence upon the admirable scene,—the amazing masses of saffron cloud-crag in the eastern sky, far, far away over the invisible ocean; the lovely sweet green of the distant slope, and, most admirable of all, the beautiful scarf cast down from heaven,—cast so low as to touch the earth to which it gave token of peace, shaming each weapon, pistol or sabre, with its benign radiance.

Suddenly, emerging from a wood on the distant slope, the main army of the British passed, as in

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review, straight under the arch of heaven. Their coats were redder than the red of the rainbow ; their bayonets gleamed like shafts of bluest steel.

We doffed our plumes and gazed enrapt upon the lovely scene. Thus forever departed from the region of the Delaware the colonial glories of Britain.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TREASON OF LEE.

HAVING sent Miss Leatherberry and Miss Truax safely off towards Virginia, our troop followed the enemy, and, on the night before the battle of Monmouth, bivouacked among the gravestones in Freehold church-yard. We were within a stone's throw of the road leading from Englishtown, where our army lay, to Monmouth Court-House, where fifteen thousand British, under Sir Henry Clinton, had halted for the night. Our troop, being within one hour's march of the enemy, threw out heavy patrols ; the gross of our corps slept in their boots with mounds of the dead for pillows.

About the time the birds began to whistle, or, in other words, close upon half-past three o'clock on Sunday morning, the 28th day of June, we were awakened by Lee's advanced column, which, deployed as skirmishers, was moving silently in platoons of four through wheat-fields and woods straight along towards the enemy's post at Monmouth Court-

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House. Following these came five thousand men, who marched in the road with a steady onward tread that sounded like a low, rumbling, muffled "oomp," "oomp," "oomp." By the time the last of them had come opposite our post in the graveyard we could see the blue of their coats, and could also see the rising dust-clouds, which, in spite of the morning dew, we had long before sniffed. The night-hawks were still zooning, and the bats were still preying upon the flies that sought to feed upon our stamping and tail-swishing horses, when an order came from General Lee for a detail of couriers and vedettes. Twenty of us, under Bonfils, at once set off, and about an hour after sunrise reported to General Lee.

When we reached the Great Eccentric we found him in parley with a party of subordinate generals. It flashed into our minds that this grand officer, of highest repute on two continents, was letting his lieutenants into his trick of victory! It was glorious! The "oomp, oomp" of the marching thousands was still resounding in my ears, and now here before me was the man who, schooled in all the strategies since Cæsar first said "March!" was about to lead them into battle. But, to our surprise and disappointment, the talk was not upon the coming battle. The general was telling of a duel in which he had once killed an expert Italian swordsman. His horse was chewing the twigs of a road-side sassafras. "Battle!" thought I; "there is to be no battle."

"By old Marshal Saxe of Fontenoy!" said Bonfils, "this is a cool soldier for so hot a morning."

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The sultriness was, indeed, oppressive, and Lee's cool unconcern hardly less so. We were with him but a few moments, however, for Snaith, an attentive listener to his discourse on the duel, soon passed us the word to move along close to the enemy and report.

Under this order I should have kept close to Bonfils, but the Frenchman gave me the slip, and I drew rein alone in the corner of an untilled field at the edge of a thick woods where I dismounted to breakfast upon some fine wild strawberries which there spotted the green with red. Having partaken freely of these, I was sitting sidewise on my filly and trying to think what I was in duty bound to do, when "Kit" put up her ears and snorted towards the wood. Hardly had I swung my stray foot into the stirrup when out from the woods flew a great many birds, some silently, but most of them with quick, queer notes of distress, and all on swift wing. Then came many creatures,—three or four deer, many rabbits and squirrels, all of them in such a state of panic that I knew something certainly was amiss.

I sat straight up and gazed into the forest. Then I put my bugle to my lips and blew a shrill alarm. I had seen an army, and it was clad in red, and it was rolling along like a great wave, as if to overwhelm us. I gave my filly the spur; I gave her the spur, though she needed it not, for she was off at a twist of the bit, and she sped so fast in her flight that I could barely keep my saddle.

As I sped away I remembered that I was a vedette, and that it was my duty to report to General Lee.

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How I then regretted the silence of my tongue!
How I wished I could cry out, as I rode up to him,
"Sir, the British are hot upon us, ten thousand
strong!"

But when I reached him I could only wave my
arms outwardly and talk to him in excited gestures.

"Who is this fool?" asked Lee of the major of the
Lighthorse.

"Sir," said Snaith, "this is a dumb fellow, bugler
of the Leatherberry Troop; what is it, Lankford?"

My hand shook as I wrote, "Tell the courteous
gentleman that the enemy are advancing rapidly in
force."

"This courier," reported Snaith, "declares the
enemy to be advancing rapidly in great force."

"We shall sound the retreat," said Lee; "bugler,
do you know the note?"

I put my horn to my lips and gave the signal.

"Now," said Lee to me, "ride back along this
road and tell the Commander-in-Chief that my corps
is withdrawing under heavy pressure."

At this command I gave my filly the steel and
sped along the road towards Englishtown.

Whenever I came to troops in the road I raised
my bugle and blew the note of urgency. They
parted as an apple parts to the edge of a knife.

By and by I came to the place whence the General
was about to set forth with his escort for the battle-
field.

He saw the condition of my horse, and studied me
apprehensively as I wrote my message.

"Is this all?" said he.

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I nodded "Yes."

"How long have you been at the front?"

I wrote, "Since near sunrise."

"And did you see General Lee at that hour?"

I nodded "Yes."

"What was he then engaged in doing?"

I wrote, as briefly as I could,—

"He was engaged then as he is now."

"In doing what?" he asked, as he read my scrawl.

Then I twice wrote what I thought, and each time wadding my paper into a ball chewed it up and spat it out like a bullet.

"Come!" said the General; "we cannot tarry long for your report."

I was aware of the watchfulness of the officers of the guard. Some of them were tightening their girths, others were already in their saddles. I felt that they were making sport of me as a courier who kept his general waiting. My head swam. Why should I, a bugler of a lighthouse troop, write what was in my mind?

Yet that is the very thing I did. I wrote, "I think he is a traitor, and I think he is playing a trick on you and your army to the peril of the continent!"

This I handed to him, my face aflame.

When he had read my words the General looked at me hard. I thought I could see the corners of his mouth twist in a smile.

"Is it so?" said he.

Three times have I cursed with my face,—once when I was given over to the Provost as a spy; once

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when the miller was killed at Cockfoot's, and on this occasion, when questioned as to Lee.

The Commander-in-Chief, having given orders for the advance of the main army, spurred forward.

"Bugler," said he, "your horse is heated, but you must keep up with us if you can, for you may be of service as a guide."

"Kit," thought I, "if you're not good for a little run at a time like this you're fit for the buzzards."

And so doubtless thought "Kit" herself. At a break in the fence she quit the road and ran through the fields abreast of the General's van, towards the great dust column that now arose from the distant battlefield.

My "Kit" was a scrub of a nag, but the very devil for speed; and, I tell you, it was a good thing for me that she had it in her mettle to go over the ground as she did, for the General's gait waxed as he rode, soon growing from a sweeping high gallop into a breakneck push for the front. No fiercer rider than he ever parted legs, and never in his whole life did he so lack in mercy to the beast that bore him as on this hot Sunday, when he lathered "Blueskin's" withers with white, and reddened his flanks with blood of spur. This great leader was a man of tigerish-deep passions, kept chained by the mastery of his will; but now they broke out in all the fury of their nature. When he had come up to the first of the fugitives, he cried, "Face about! Face about!" And those who followed him echoed his words, shouting, "Halt, you cowards! Face about! Face about!"

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Some of the men in flight were ridden over even as a courier speeding post-haste through a village street tramples on and disperses flocks of waddling ducks and hissing geese.

At last the General drew rein by the side of Lee.

"Death, sir!" he cried; "in God's name, what does this mean?"

"Sir,—sir?" said Lee, as if struck by a shot, putting his hand to his throat, and fingering it nervously as he twisted his body about in his saddle. "Sir! I do not comprehend you."

"I wish to know what means this confusion."

"My men are retreating. I see no confusion."

"Yes, but there is confusion and damned poltroonery, to boot! Damned poltroonery!" he added, holding out his right hand, and tapping his thumb with his forefinger, his middle finger, his ring finger, his little finger.

Pollice truncato! Maimed in his fighting hand. His cock-lock thumb cut off with cowardice pre-pense! Such was the great chief's deliberate insult to Lee. No worse a word than poltroon could pass 'twixt soldier and soldier.

Washington felt in this crisis as the woodsman feels when at the moment of his master-stroke his axe-head flies the helve. That an oath on his lips meant quick, hard heart-thumping down under his ribs may be vowed to all the world.

Lee, as I say, was as a cock with a cut comb.

"I repeat, sir," quoth he, humbly, "I do not comprehend you."

Washington looked at him with contempt, and his

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lips parted as if to repeat his oath; but he all at once bowed his head and wheeled his horse towards his followers. At that instant I caught the best view of him I had ever gained. His face was strangely lit, —his eyes alert and gleaming, his jaws set, his brows drawn in a black frown. His face was strangely lit; but, strangest of all, was the smile that now came into it as he drew his blade out of its scabbard and said in a very calm voice, "We will make a stand here, gentlemen! This is as good a spot as any for a sharp fight!"

And there it was the army made its all-day stand.

Lee was a bright-brained, sharp-tongued English egotist of a cynical turn, yet ambitious past reckoning. He to himself was almost the whole of it. He looked upon himself as an abused great man. To him Washington was a good soul, but a person of the provinces inexperienced in European warfare, yet with the pick of European soldiers to contend against. Lee thought of Lee much as Cæsar may have thought of Cæsar; and Congress to Lee was as a Rome to be won over, whereupon all would be won. Narrow, vindictive, politic, he played a bold game for renown, and played it with cunning. Had Washington won a victory at Monmouth, all would have been over, for the glory of Lee. So he chose to strike feebly with the scabbard when ordered to cut deep with the sword. His attack was a mock affair. He struck with a plotter's aim, and cut himself as deep as to the spleen.

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CHAPTER VIII

HEAT OF BATTLE.

As for the army's shame at this particular hour, no one need try to hide it. Most of the panic-stricken fellows were in the road; some were in the fields, marching towards us at the double-quick, and scores upon scores were flat on their bellies in the beds of the tiny streams which here trickled along through the slashes. Their thirst was consuming. Their eyes were blood-shot, their swollen tongues hung out like the tongues of spent hounds. Wherever they saw a swampy patch thither they rushed despite of sword whack and loud command. Their faces were asmut with dirt and adrip with sweat, and they were woe-begone to the last degree of desperation. As many a Continental's toe was out in the snow at Valley Forge, so now many a Continental heel was quickened by the fire in the yellow sand of Monmouth.

But the panic was speedily broken. It was a spirit-stirring sight,—the way the advancing wave of blue met the blue wave retreating. During that hour the great chief was at his greatest. Wave met wave, and he mastered both. The cry was "the best fighters forward!" He drew a new battle line, and I tell you it was a pretty sight,—the way the men came up to it and threw themselves flat on the earth,

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biting at the grass and the grape-vines to cool their tongues.

Our troop was thrown to the front to rally the fugitives. We crossed the first morass in advance of the new line, and posted ourselves in a field to the left of Monmouth road. In our rear was a little stream; in our front a trampled wheat-field.

Bonfils caught a fugitive by the collar, gave him a tug at a full canteen, and made him the nucleus of a rally in the rear of the troop. Those who got a little water on their tongues were not hard to hold or pacify, but such as leaped the stream without drink and ran on up the hill-side were in a frenzy, and had to be beaten down or ridden over before they would stand to the colors now steadfast on the crest. In this way a hundred or better had fallen in behind the troop, when two visitors that seemed to come with equal speed broke in upon us. The first was a shell that flew screaming from a British field-piece on a knoll a half-mile to the eastward; the other visitor was an officer, who, having outridden his guard, pulled up in our front and gazed for a moment towards the picked troops of Cornwallis who had begun to show themselves in the road just beyond.

"Retire slowly," said he, "and take post on the hill to the rear."

We gave him a hurrah. It was the chief. "Blue-skin" was reeking.

But what was our surprise, the very next moment, to hear the rumble of wheels and see Laffoon's gun planted in the road on our right!

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"We are to withdraw," said our major.

"Give me a half-dozen barks at 'em," cried out Laffoon, "and I'll go back with you. Well," he added, as he prepared to deliver his first shot, "I guess this is what they call a battle, and I guess the historians will split many a quill in telling about it; but I must say the real thing falls short of what a fellow is usually persuaded to look for. Now behold this hop-toad in front of us! Does he seem excited by the thunder of artillery? Nay, his tongue is out for flies this very instant. As for me, I'm so far gone in the region of my stomach that I would give all the glory Cæsar gained for a six-inch slice of cheese. God help me, as an unappreciative, unheroic cuss! I can't see the fury, I can't see the fun, and I can't see for the life of me that a battle's a bully-good thing!"

It would have been better for Laffoon if, instead of using his tongue so much, he had used his eyes a little more. For soon the bullets of the grenadiers began to sing the song of zip and zing, and we hurried away. He, too, sought to withdraw, but his gun became mired in the morass. Pfaff was in a fix. He was between two fires. The lines were now drawn, and the British skirmishers were advancing towards the gun. What could Pfaff do but abandon his piece? He cut his traces and galloped up the hill. The men laughed and scoffed as he broke through the line, and some of them cursed him as a coward.

The battle lines were now facing each other, and they made a splendid show, stretching as far as the eye could see,—a line of red to the east, a line of

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blue to the west. Lee, disgraced, had been sent to the rear. The panic had been stayed. The battle-dust had sunk to earth; the battle-smoke had ascended towards the sky. A chestnut-tree, then in flower, shielded our horses from the heat of the sun; a robin in the tree burst forth with song. "Hark!" said Bonfils; "'tis a bird singing near the nest of his mate!"

What tranquillity in the midst of storm!

By and by, quiet still reigning, whom did we see pass through the American line but Laffoon. He drove a team of six artillery horses, behind which trundled a timber-cart with huge wheels. It was a cart such as is used in hauling logs of immense girth. Pfaff rode a tongue horse, and he made straight for his gun in the morass. When he reached the morass he jumped down into the water, fastened the chain around the gun, and then by the power of his team hoisted it into place and fixed his sweep in the hook. Meantime, the British skirmishers, advancing through the alders that grew in the skirts of the morass, were hurrying towards him. The foremost red-coat waded out among the water-lilies and took steady aim with his rifle.

"He is a dead man!" cried Bonfils.

But Laffoon, loosening the sweep from its hook, let go. The sweep described a half-circle, and the skirmisher was struck as by a thunderbolt and driven deep into the mud. Then, again, Laffoon secured his sweep, whipped up his horses, and dragged his cannon from the mire. Our army applauded, but applauded in wonder, for the bombardier seemed to

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be driving straight towards the enemy. He kept on towards the British line for a long way. They ceased to fire upon him. Was he deserting us? Suddenly Laffoon wheeled into a by-road and put whip to his horses. He was riding parallel to the British. Pop, pop, pop went their guns, but still he sat his horse and played with his long lash upon his leaders. A cry went up. Both armies were cheering. It was, indeed, a splendid sight,—this solitary gunner daring a thousand muskets. Yet the very act paralyzed the arm of enmity. The bombardier kept on for many minutes, speeding along the by-road, looking neither to right nor to left. At last he turned. He stood up in his stirrups and shouted to his horses. They sprang into a furious gallop. They came down the hill, crossed the stream, and flew in among us. The General pulled off his hat. A great cry passed along our lines. It was the turn of the day. Before that it had been defeat; now it was a rage for victory.

Our new fighting line stretched for upward of a mile along a low crest fronted with morasses. It was bent like an ox-yoke, one end holding Greene, on the right of Monmouth road, and the other Stirling, on the left, each with sharpest horn advanced, ready to gore to the bowels. On a knoll in front of Stirling were batteries and horse; supporting Greene was a plump of cannon, so planted on Comb's Hill as to sweep our right front enfilade.

As for the British alignment, it was in the shape of a long red dash, straight across our front; our line was as a warrior's bow, theirs like a great red

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arrow, fledged with light-horsemen and pointed with the sabre of the dragoon.

The enemy's first assault was against Stirling and the cavalry. Skirmishers, crawling on their bellies into the wheat-field, set the ripened grain on fire. Under cover of the smoke of this the British sought to steal up the hill and catch us unaware; but our parry was sharp, and they fell back as the black columns lifted and passed away under pressure of the shifting air.

But the main assault was on the right, where Wayne was hiding at the foot of Comb's Hill. Wayne was the fighting horn at that end of the yoke. His opponent was Monckton. Monckton was the bravest of the king's men this side the water. They say he talked to his men that day till his tongue swelled. That may be so, but we of the Leatherberry Troop certainly heard his command, "Forward!" and it was no whisper, either. There was a company of us in his front. We were a detail of skirmishers, with orders to draw the fire of the "grannies." All through our army the British grenadiers were known as the "grannies." We rode across an apple orchard, and came upon the British line. At one time we were in half-pistol-shot of Monckton. His men were very steady. We popped at them with our musketoons and spat at them. They laughed. We galloped up and down their line and cursed them. They bore it all as if we had been mosquitoes.

Say "Monckton" to our old men of the army, and they'll take off their hats and bang away in his

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honor; say Lee to them, and they will vow to you he was a very almanac of the passions, a calendar of the vices,—so complete a compound of the brutalities, they'll say, never walked before. Add a trifle to their praise of Monckton, subtract immensely from their censure of Lee. For, I pray you all, understand it well,—Lee was Monmouth's scapegoat, Monckton its lion; the first the poltroon of the morning, the other the hero of the closing day.

But Monckton's attack was to Wayne's defence as the sting of a honey-bee to a rattlesnake's bite.

We witnessed the collision from the rear of the artillery on Comb's Hill, whither we retired as the British line began to sweep steadily forward. Laffoon's gun was among the batteries that spoke up in protest of this advance, and it was "Sullen Thunder" that disarmed a whole company at a single shot. This we noted even as we noted the bravery of poor Molly Pitcher, now so rich in fame. But it was Wayne who met Monckton, and laid him low. In those days men's patience was as short as their breeches, and Wayne did not tarry long in his hiding-place after Monckton had been treated to his first volley. Out he dashed from his covert, and into the field he sped; and then the battle closed, and there the infantry had it, horn-to-horn, like a thousand bulls tumbling on a dusty plain. Monckton was slain; his line forced back. The "high sergeant" fell. In the nick of the battle the British were beaten. And then came a terrific cannonade, the most thunderous of the war. It was all din and devilry, and for an hour a man could not make head or tail of the business.

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During this time the Leatherberry Troopers stood to horse round-about a pool in a miry stream. This drinking-place was half-way between the lines, and thither resorted many men maddened with thirst. Such as came from our own lines we permitted to drink; whenever we saw a red-coat we disarmed him, gave him a bucketful, and sent him off a prisoner. And thus the battle raged till near set of sun.

CHAPTER IX.

CHARGE OF THE LIGHTHORSE.

Now, I do not surely know whether I am right or not, but it is woven in my memory that this hereinafter immediately told of is true to the crossing of a *t*.

At any rate, I hope and pray that the hounds of my words will follow the fox of thought, and come fairly in at the death.

Towards sundown, with the battle in his hands, and plans for the next day's fight in his head, the General ordered our troop to pass by the right to Sir Henry Clinton's rear and stir up Morgan's corps of sharp-shooters, of whom much had been expected, but from whom not a sound had come throughout that dreadful Sunday. We were to find the riflemen, deliver a message, and join them at daybreak in an attack on the enemy's flank. We passed along in rear of our own line, skirted a stretch of timber, crossed a field, and made off for the south. What

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we needed most was water for our horses, and we were all glad when, by and by, we came to a woods where, as our guide informed us, was a fine watering-place for man and beast.

So into the woods we rode three abreast, with Snaith and Littlejohn, crupper to crupper, in front of the troop. My post as bugler was by their side; but, as it happened, I was with Bonfils a few paces in their rear. We were moving along an old blind wood road parallel to a swampy stream, our purpose being to ride out into a wider road that crossed the stream a few rods ahead. At this crossing we were to water our horses, and then take the wide road south. The unused way through the woods was known as the Grapevine road. It was sandy, and brown with multitudinous needles of the pine. On either hand were stunted trees that served as a continuous screen for us, and on such yielding ground the hoof-sounds of the horses were as if muffled.

At this moment the troop was thrown into a state of irritation by the most trifling matter in the world,—trifling, I say, though every cavalryman understands what a commotion a vicious, buzzing, humming, biting horsefly has in its power to cause along a line of mounted men. The fly that now worried the Leatherberry Lighthorse had attacked us in the rear a minute or so before, and, having paid its compliments to the horses of Pruitt, Updegraff, Beaujeau, Shallcross, and a half-dozen others as it flew zigzagging towards the van, now alighted upon "Topgallant's" croup immediately in front of Bonfils. That trooper at once grasped his reins with his left

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hand, seized the brim of his cap with his right, and bent forward to slay the enemy then and there. This act caused me to tighten my reins so as not to ride up against him, and as I did so I saw a flash of fire in the eyes of Bonfils. In a twinkling he leaned outwardly towards the bushes, and with his cap struck savagely at an object hitherto unseen,—a red-coat with trigger-finger on cock and mouth agape.

"Drop that!" hissed Bonfils, and the man did drop his musket; but before he could be stayed he was off into the thicket.

This was the first we knew of the presence of the British. All drew without clatter, and though it was felt that the red-coat was doubtless a skulker, we thenceforth were on the *qui vive*, riding erect, and watching the flutter of every leaf.

Thus we jogged along, still three abreast, but now as silent as death, and speedily came to the great road leading down to the watering-place.

Upon the first alarm I had ridden forward and taken post at the major's side, and, bugle in hand, I watched his lips as a cat watches a bird in a tree awaiting the order of the moment.

We three—Snaith, Littlejohn, and I—were now so far in advance of the first file of the troop as to be hidden from it by a group of low cedars which stood at the intersection of the roads. The Grapevine road had two arms as the letter Y has, one arm leading down to the stream, and the other leading away from it.

As I looked along the downward arm I opened my eyes. The watering-place was possessed by the

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British,—the road was filled with them, the woods were red with them. They were as thick as hornets on a peach-drier.

"What luck is this of ours!" exclaimed Littlejohn, breathing heavily as he peered through the tops of the cedars. "They are aiming for our army's flank! 'Tis a twilight attack! What luck is ours, major!" said he, turning to Snaith.

"We are to take this road to the right," whispered the major.

Only for a little instant of time was his face towards me, but in that flash of his countenance I could read the gist of what was passing in his thought. "Here," he seemed to say, with his quick, cunning eyes, "here is a green screen of foliage—tree and bush and brake—betwixt us and the enemy, and this screen saves us; for here's a plain road for exit, and out we go. The rearmost troopers may be shot; but, damn them, whomsoever they be! They'll be a red mark to save us in our report."

"But," said Littlejohn, bowing low, yet looking all the time sideways upon Snaith, "we are to charge the enemy as I understand it."

"Sir!" cried Snaith, now red with anger.

"We will charge the enemy," said Littlejohn. "Please, sir, give the word."

"Withdraw!" hissed Snaith; "that is my command."

At that instant Littlejohn, gripping Snaith by the throat, beat his head hard down against the iron pommel of his own saddle.

"Order us to the charge," said Littlejohn, "or, by

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the God above us, I'll wring your craven neck for you as I would a chicken's!"

I, for my part, was in such a frenzy of excitement that when I caught the major's words, "charge, charge," given in lowest whimper, I could hardly bring my bugle to my lips.

And before I could make a sound with my horn I heard Littlejohn, now the incarnation of rebellion, cry out at the top of his lungs, "Charge!" And then again, "Trot! Gallop! Charge!"

And then again, "Ride hard, strike quick, cut deep, follow!"

"Forward! forward!" cried Bonfils, slashing up among the branches with his sabre, and cutting down a hatful of green leaves at every swish. Then we heard, far in the rear, Beaujeau's staccato cry, and knew all to be riding hot-foot forward.

They came out of the gap in the woods like boar-hounds unleashed, some with their sabres betwixt their teeth, and their musketoon unslung, others hilt in hand; and the wild war-yell they gave as they wheeled into the main road, broke into a romping gallop, and drove down upon the British, is a never-to-be-forgotten sound.

What with the dust, the outcries, the hurly-burly, I never saw such a time, and never expect to again; for, of course, I am done with wars and snarls of all kinds.

Now, as it happened, Sir Lounsbury Asquith was in temporary command of the thick belt of red-coats stretched line upon line across the road, and no sooner had he become aware of the presence of our

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lighthorsemen than he sang out, "By the volley, fire!" kneeling low to the ground as he uttered his command in order that the musket-balls might pass over his head.

Still farther advanced up-hill knelt a youth who seemed to mind us no more than he would have minded a cloud of summer dust blown from the wheels of a passing wagon. He would not budge for us; but the next instant "Topgallant's" forelegs knocked him over, and his body was kicked about among the flying hoofs like a mere ball of rubber.

"By the volley, fire!" cried Sir Lounsbury.

But we got in among them before they could let fly.

It is singular that this should have been so, yet so it was. Were they tardy on the trigger, or were we quick in the dash?

Certain it is that our men were in among the British before their muskets cracked. Nevertheless, they threw their guns at us hand over shoulder, with their bayonet points aimed at us like so many huge and mighty darts. These, entering a horse, felled him at the stroke and rolled his rider down under the hoofs of those hotly following.

Yes, we took this mass of British infantry by complete surprise. It must have seemed to the whole roadful of 'em as if we had dropped from the tree-tops. Yet, though I was aware that many of the red-coats had got a touch of panic, and though I could see some of them drop their muskets and seek to push out of the way, I knew as well as I knew anything that the men in the rear who knelt six rows

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deep across the road with bayonets bent upward as if to rip the bellies of our horses were as steadfast as a rock, and that the only thing for us to do was to impale ourselves upon them, or go over them at a jump. This must have been in Littlejohn's mind; for, when within a spear's length of the bayonets, he gave "Topgallant" a fox-hunting hunch with his heels, and up into the air shot the horse in a glorious leap as if taking hedge, ditch, and the devil's thumb. Up and over he went, and when he came down he struck a head with every hoof.

As for my filly, "Kit," she at this crisis played me foul. When she came close to the British she shied at the bayonets, and stood up on her hind legs and pawed the air above them until she was thrice speared,—in the neck, in the stifle, in the belly. The last thrust cut the girth, and, as the saddle slipped from under me, I threw up my arms and clutched an overhanging branch.

There, suspended like Absalom, I saw the rear squadrons drive through and along.

Everything was now tumultuously done. It was a *mêlée*. The road was choked and gorged with horses and men, and the oncoming rear platoons spread out like an opening fan to the right and to the left. Those at the tail end escaped, riding break-neck through the thickets; we at the head were the ones who got the powder-dust in our windpipes, if not steel in our hearts.

As for me, my experience was remarkable. The point of one of the bayonets thrust at my filly had passed clean through into my thigh, and my boot-

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leg was soon filled with blood. I grew weak and let go my hold, and as I dropped a powerful fellow, who lay flat on his back, clutched me and held me up as a shield for his own body. The horses were still plunging forward, and I was struck time and again by their hoofs, but the red-coat—a very blacksmith of a fellow—still gripped me to him and held me like a buckler.

Six of the frenzied creatures thus went over me, one by one, and then came the riderless black stallion of Cockfoot's, his head down 'twixt his forelegs, his ears bent back against his neck, and a look of strange rage in his eyes. Even as I saw him he saw me, and hardly had I put up my right arm to ward him off, when he viciously bit at me with a side lunge, but in nowise staying his onward dash. He got me near the shoulder and clinched his teeth as with a death-hold, so that my arm seemed to be about to be torn out of its socket, as indeed my body was torn from the grasp of the fellow for whom I had all this time served as a shield. I was lifted clean out of the frightened fellow's grip and borne bodily on over the fallen horses and men for a moment, when the mad stallion turned a somersault and fell heavily among them all. So still did the brute seem that I, now beside myself with pain from the clinch of his teeth, thought him either stunned or downright dead; but he still held me by the arm. Then I got my left hand from under him, braced myself against the ribs of a dying horse upon which my head had struck in falling, and with my left thumb and forefinger, seized the stallion in the nostrils to shut off his wind and

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thus free myself from his grip. The last of that frantic moment I remember was that, as I gripped him between the nostrils, seeking in my frenzy to rip them from the bone, the stallion set his teeth the tighter in my flesh ; and that, I think it was, made me faint away so that for a time I knew of nothing and felt no hurt.

CHAPTER X.

WHICH TAKES US TO THE END.

WHEN I came to I saw that the stallion was dead. The body of the horse against which I lay was still heaving, and I truly believe that this motion kept my own life in my body. Had the poor brute been dead I too might have remained forever breathless. As it was, I regained my senses and looked around me. I cannot describe the sights of that moment,—I would not describe them if I could. But of Snaith I must tell. I cannot help telling of Snaith. He was sitting on the ground close beside me. His lower jaw was shot away. He looked upon me with a smile. It was horrible. He had a tiny looking-glass in his hand, and was examining his own image. It was a pocket-mirror, but was large enough for him to see how fearfully he was maimed. He looked pleadingly upon me ; I upon him with horror. He drew a small pistol from his pocket, pointed it at his temple, and, with a most graceful motion, handed the weapon

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to me. He was begging me to kill him. To kill him? Why, yes; to kill him would be a sweet mercy. I took the pistol and pointed it towards his head. He shut his eyes; and I shut mine! Again I swooned, and all the world was as a blank.

When I had recovered I saw Major Snaith on the ground beside me. His left hand still held the looking-glass, and in the grasp of his right hand was the pistol. He was dead. He had shot himself in the temple.

Bending over the body was Laffoon, the bombardier.

"The toe of my old boot," he was saying, "has oftentimes looked up to me with more intelligence than this flat-on-his-back fellow shows!"

Strange, was it not? that I exclaimed; but that is precisely what I did,—exclaimed aloud! The fearful shock had given me back my lost speech!

Nevertheless, thrilled though I was with unutterable joy, I groaned by reason of my bodily pains.

"What, trumpeter!" cried the bombardier; "you're the very lad I've been looking for. Old Juba's back there in the woods waiting for us. He's picked up an ox-team somewhere or other, and he's got his wounded master packed away in straw. Come! We must hurry away from this place."

Thereupon Laffoon clapped a handful of clay and mud on my wounded thigh, and guided me to Juba's ambulance. There I found Surgeon Pruitt, who, though himself sorely hurt with a bayonet jab, was striving to bring back Littlejohn to a consciousness of his surroundings. The young captain lay like a

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dead man, but his heart and lungs were still at work.

"Farewell!" said the bombardier, "I must hurry back to my post!"

"Farewell!" said Pruitt; and then by the faint light of the moon in the west we trundled southward.

Juba was making for salt water. At daybreak we were on the banks of a river that flowed into the ocean, and by noon we were floating in a little sloop on the Atlantic itself. Juba loved his master, and he loved the salt water. He explained to us that as soon as he had found "young moss" on the battle-field he had made up his mind to hurry along with him to Shark River, where the sea-winds would cool and refresh him, and whence he could sail in a few days to the Chesapeake and Tred Avon. "Ef de Lawd done writ it down dat he mus' die, wy den he be dar at home; 'en we kin put 'im in de groun' 'longside his ma."

Juba had his master's purse, and that was why he was able to put oil upon our waves of progress.

We were blessed with a good west wind, and we stood, close-hauled, down the coast. Far, far at sea we saw the great Toulon fleet sailing northward to blockade my Lord Howe's fleet at New York, whither Sir Henry Clinton had fled. This we beheld by day; at night, for many rods around, we saw the black waters break into white.

Surgeon Pruitt thought Littlejohn would be dead long before we could reach the Capes of Chesapeake; but though the young captain was in a constant fever for many days, he was still alive when we

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sailed in at the mouth of the bay and turned prow towards the north.

There were two reasons why we put in at Mob-jack,—the winds were adverse, and Littlejohn was in delirium from his fever.

Captain Polly welcomed us at the wharf. Mary Truax, her guest, became our young captain's nurse and attendant.

Did Littlejohn recover? Ask the men who fought with him at Cowpens and Guilford Court-House! Yes, he recovered, and, re-enlisting in the Maryland line, went south for the war. I was in the Delaware line, and we had many an hour together under the stars of Carolina.

But what of the others in this multiplied business of knaves and true gentlemen? What of Conway, and what, furthermore, of Lee? Conway's senseless persistence in antagonism of the Chief led to a duel with Cadwalader. This duel was fought in a high wind on the Fourth of July, six days after the Monmouth affair. Conway's bullet sped by its mark. Cadwalader withheld his shot. "Why do you not fire?" asked Conway. "Let the gale pass, sir," replied Cadwalader, "and I shall act my part!"

"You shall have a fair chance of performing it well," replied Conway, standing flat-footed and full-front without flinching.

At the crack of Cadwalader's pistol Conway fell. The ball had passed in at his mouth. His second lifted the club of Conway's hair and picked the bullet out from the back of the conspirator's neck. Yet

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Conway lived to plot in distant India as he had plotted in America.

After Monmouth, Lee was court-martialed and suspended from the army for a twelve-month. Laurens called him out, and they fought on the Point-no-Point road, near Philadelphia. Lee fell, but lived a few years to pet his dogs and play a cynic's part on his estate in Virginia.

Fitzpatrick was hanged at the cart's tail in Chester. Galloway escaped to England.

After Yorktown, General Washington came over to Mobjack to pay his respects to Captain Polly. "All France" was with him. The French ships were at anchor in Mobjack roads. Mahogany Hall was in festal trim. The finest three regiments in the world came ashore,—the Bourbonnais, the Saintonge, the Soissonnais,—each a thousand strong, and they were drawn up in line on the lawn when Littlejohn and the Quaker Maid were married. Such a wedding you never see nowadays. Oh, no! such a wedding you never see!

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